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NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

THESIS

**INFORMATION OPERATIONS, AN EVOLUTIONARY
STEP FOR THE MEXICAN ARMED FORCES**

by

Saul Hiram Bandala-Garza
David Vargas Schulz

December 2007

Thesis Advisor:
Second Reader:

Hy Rothstein
Mark T. Berger

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**INFORMATION OPERATIONS, AN EVOLUTIONARY STEP FOR THE
MEXICAN ARMED FORCES**

Saúl Hiram Bandala-Garza
Lieutenant Commander, Mexican Navy
B.S., Heroica Escuela Naval Militar (Mexico), 1990

David Vargas Schulz
Captain, United States Army
B.A., University of California Los Angeles, 2003

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS

from the

**NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
December 2007**

Author: Saul H. Bandala-Garza

David Vargas Schulz

Approved by: Hy Rothstein
Thesis Advisor

Mark. T. Berger
Second Reader

Gordon McCormick
Chairman, Department of Defense Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis will focus on the Mexican Armed Force's ability to deal with existing and future unconventional threats and insurgencies. The modern Mexican Armed Forces are the result of an enduring evolutionary process, which has made the necessary changes to deal with the emerging threats against the state. Mexico's criminal threat has evolved because of 9/11 and because of the U.S.-led crackdown on Colombian drug cartels. Mexico's modern adversary is well versed in waging mass media campaigns and uses terrorist tactics to instill fear in Mexico's population. Mexico's current threats consist of drug trafficking, which has resulted in increased levels of violence and rebel insurgencies that have also transitioned from revolutionary nationalists to violent criminals.

Therefore, to positively counter the rise of social and political violence, Mexico's government needs to carefully plan its response to insurgencies. Mexico must develop alternate and unconventional remedies to preserve its national security. Current Mexican military strategies rely on the mass mobilization of ground and air troops for mainly search and destroy operations. Although, the evolving threat warrants an unorthodox military strategy, this thesis will only focus on the Mexican Navy's ability to take the lead in dealing with the nation's rising unconventional threats.

This thesis uses both the insurgency and counterinsurgency model developed by Gordon H. McCormick, known as the "Mystic Diamond," and Information Operations to frame the unconventional state strategy. This analytical tool offers a better understanding of how an insurgency works, as well as the interaction and relations among the different actors involved. The study presents an in depth case study of Colombia and the development of Information Operation capabilities to support its policies and objectives. Furthermore, this study also presents a concise case study of Mexico and describes how the country has managed its challenges without an Information Operations capability.

Using McCormick's Model of Counterinsurgency, this thesis proposes that the development of an Information Operations capability within the Mexican Armed Forces will increase operational effectiveness against internal and external threats, influence public opinion to support government actions, preserve tranquility, and ensure national stability during crises. States in general and Mexico in particular, should continue to use Information Operations and Psychological Operations in order to deal with the enemy of tomorrow while maintaining popular support.

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I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

A. BACKGROUND

Warfare has always sponsored and driven the development of technology. Consequently, warfare has evolved and adapted whenever new technologies become available. A significant part of technology is designed to gain insight into the intentions of potential adversaries. Such insight encourages or discourages actors before they engage in action. Diplomatic and military actions are always supported by information and intelligence to maximize an edge over adversaries. Therefore, the goal for any military -- to defeat an enemy with minimal costs -- has resulted in new techniques that ideally deter the enemy from the fight. These types of operations are sometimes referred to as "Information Operations."

Contemporary United States military doctrine recognizes five components of Information Operations: psychological operations (PSYOP), military deception (MILDEC), operations security (OPSEC), electronic warfare (EW), and computer network operations (CNO). The PSYOP, MILDEC and OPSEC are the oldest and most traditional of these components; EW and CNO are the result of technological developments that date back to World War II. Additionally, efficiency and affordability make this type of operations ideal for insurgencies to fight against the state.

These components have mostly been used by countries that have the technological means, resources, and human expertise to use them. Following the Cold War, the United States boasted the largest military organization dedicated to Information Operations. The American need to protect its interests and conduct military operations throughout the world against a wide variety of potential enemies has caused its military to develop its Information Operations capability. Using the U.S.'s military Information Operations doctrine as a base,

this thesis will analyze Information Operations as they relate to Colombia and specifically Mexico. The U.S. Department of Defense Joint Publication 3-13 defines Information Operations:

As the integrated employment of electronic warfare (EW), computer network operations (CNO), psychological operations (PSYOP), military deception (MILDEC), and operations security (OPSEC), in concert with specified supporting and related capabilities, to influence, disrupt, corrupt, or usurp adversarial human and automated decision making while protecting our own.¹

This definition encompasses the various U.S. military capabilities and essential components to support its military operations. Each branch of the U.S. Armed Forces has its own definition of Information Operations. The Air Force Defense Doctrine, Document 2-5, integrates only three of the five previously mentioned components of Information Operations.² Despite the difference, both publications recognize the essential focus of Information Operations: to psychologically affect the adversary to reduce the value of his information systems and to increase the value of one's own information capabilities. To influence an adversary, every available opportunity must be exhausted to gain the information advantage. Ideally, the winner wins without firing a single shot or shedding any blood. Nevertheless, throughout history Information Operations has mostly been used as a tool in support of combat operations or as a combat multiplier. This was the case during the Second World War when the Germans used components of Information Operations to conceal their preparations for Operation Barbarossa. To accomplish this, the Germans "launched what they themselves called the 'greatest deception operation in the history of war' to mislead their enemies about their intention to invade Russia, and conceal the

¹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Information Operations: Joint Publication 3-13," 13 February 2006 [web site]; available from http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/new_pubs/jp3_13.pdf; Internet; accessed 9 October 2007, ix.

² United States Air Force, "Information Operations: Air Force Doctrine Document 2-5," 11 January 2005 [web site]; available from <http://www.doctrine.af.mil/Library/Doctrine/afdd2-5.pdf>; Internet; accessed 9 October 2007, 51.

time, direction, and strength of the blow.”³ Afterwards, the Allies took Information Operations to an unprecedented level: they designed “Operation Bodyguard” that deceived German forces about the landing of allied forces in Normandy.⁴ Today, the development of technology and mass communications has enabled Information Operations to broaden and transform warfare in unprecedented ways. The evolution of the information age conflict spectrum is illustrated by Arquilla and Ronfeldt’s proposition. This now considers Cyberwar and Netwar as an integral part of war.⁵

This thesis will focus on the psychological operations component of Information Operations; specifically, how its establishment within the Mexican Navy would influence foreign and domestic public opinion to support government actions, preserve tranquility, and to ensure stability during crises.⁶ Since the Mexican Navy is always concerned with optimizing its resources while fulfilling its mission, Information Operations could be a useful tool. The concept of information operations that best defines this technique for the purpose of this research is the one presented by William M. Darley:

Information Operations, as the name implies, is an evolutionary permutation of operational culture, emphasizing control over elements of information rather than so-called kinetic weapons systems. It is essentially a doctrinal paradigm that seeks to cohesively link active information measures, both defensive and offensive, to enable the operational commander to manipulate information activities to achieve objectives. It appropriately includes measures specifically designed to both confuse and deceive, and to manipulate, persuade or psychologically coerce targeted audiences.⁷

³ Roy Godson and James J. Wirtz, eds., *Strategic Denial and Deception: The Twenty-First Century Challenge*, 5th ed.(New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 81.

⁴ Jon Latimer, *Deception in War* (Woodstock and New York: Overlook Press, 2003), 205.

⁵ David Ronfeldt and others, *The Zapatista ‘Social Netwar’ in Mexico* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1998), 8.

⁶ Unlike in the United States, the Mexican government does not forbid military Psychological Operations against the domestic audience.

⁷ William M. Darley, *Why Public Affairs Is Not Information Operations*, Army, Vol. 55, Iss. 1. (January 2005), 9.

The information age has made technology more readily available to anyone who can afford it. To compensate for their limited resources, some actors, who act against the state, have distinguished themselves by their use of Information Operations. This was the case with the Zapatista uprising in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas. Zapatista leadership used the media and the internet to gain local and international support for its cause.

Some sectors of the population are afraid that the use of Information Operations by the state will hinder their privacy and endanger democracy. However, all Information Operations carried out by the state is governed by law. It is necessary for the state and the military to develop Information Operation capabilities to dominate the information age battle space.

B. PURPOSE

The purpose of this research is to examine the principles of Information Operations that if properly implemented within the Mexican Navy would enable it to improve the way in which the Institution accomplishes its mission and attains its objectives. Mexico's Secretariat of National Defense, which encompasses the Army and the Air Force, plays an essential part within the Mexican Armed Forces. However, this research will focus only on the Secretariat of the Navy and the Mexican Navy. The modern Mexican Navy is the result of an evolutionary process as a result of dealing with emerging threats and optimizing its resources. Currently, the Mexican Navy does not have a specialized staff dedicated to Information Operations. Although the Mexican Navy has a public relations unit, the expanded use of the I.O. principles might prove useful to maximize the Navy's overall performance.

C. HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

An Information Operations capability in the Mexican Navy would increase operational effectiveness against internal and external threats, influence public opinion to support government actions, preserve tranquility, and ensure national stability during crises.

The Mexican Navy's mission is to employ the nation's naval power against Mexico's external and internal threats. One of the functions of the Mexican Navy is to protect the country's strategic facilities within the Navy's jurisdiction and wherever the president orders. Another responsibility is to guarantee legal order in the Mexican maritime zones by countering terrorism, smuggling, piracy at sea, trafficking of people, weapons, and drugs. To fulfill these responsibilities, the Navy's tasks consist of prevention, deterrence, and sea control. Information Operations can play a significant role in supporting the prevention and deterrence aspects of this naval responsibility.

To explore this hypothesis, the following questions must be answered:

1. Why does the Mexican Navy not possess an Information Operations' capability to support its operations?
2. Is it desirable for the Mexican Navy to develop an Information Operations capability?
3. What lessons can be learned from Information Operations used in other Latin American countries that would benefit the Mexican Navy?
4. What are the principles of Information Operations that, if properly implemented within the Mexican Navy, would enable it to improve the way in which the Institution accomplishes its mission and attains its objectives?

D. THE MEXICAN AUTHORITIES

Currently in Mexico, there is no evidence of a direct relationship between drug trafficking activities and insurgencies. However, this is not the case in other Latin American countries where drug money is used to fund insurgencies. The most relevant example of this is in Colombia: the Fuerzas Armadas

Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) and the Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN) initially became involved in narco-trafficking activities by providing protection; eventually, they “adopted narco-trafficking themselves, becoming stronger financially, and independent of outside support.”⁸ In Mexico, despite the lack of connection between both activities, the Mexican military and police force are responsible for countering both as separate entities.

In 1988, President Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado declared drug trafficking a threat to national security. This served as the tipping point for the involvement of the military in the fight against drugs.⁹ Subsequent federal administrations also made the fight against drugs a priority for the Mexican government. As a result, the military has increased its cooperation with civil authorities and acquired equipment for counter-narcotics operations. In accordance with the Mexican Constitution and the National Security Law,¹⁰ military expansion has been justified by the need to respond corruption and law-breaking that has undermined police authority and credibility.¹¹ As a result of the large amounts of money from drug trafficking, government corruption has increased. According to the Corruption Perception Index of 2006 by Transparency International, Mexico was ranked seventieth among countries with corruption. In 2001, it ranked fifty-first.¹² This increase in corruption is indicative of the dire need for the Mexican

⁸ Myles R. R. Frechette, *Colombia and the United States—the Partnership: but What is the Endgame?* Book online. Strategic Studies Institute, January 2007. Available from <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB762.pdf>; Internet; accessed 28 May 2007, 3.

⁹ Peter Reuter and David Ronfeldt, *Quest for Integrity: The Mexican-US Drug Issue in the 1980s* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1992), 22.

¹⁰ H. Congreso de la Unión, “Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos [Political Constitution of the United Mexican States],” Article 89, fraction VI [web site]; available from <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/1.pdf>; Internet; accessed 11 October 2007.

¹¹ Aleida Ferreyra and Renata Segura, “Examining the military in the local sphere: Colombia and Mexico,” *Latin American Perspectives* 27, (March 2000) 18.

¹² Transparency International, “Corruption Perceptions Index 2006,” 24 September 2007 [web site]; available from http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/cpi/2006; Internet; accessed 10 October 2007.

government to use a holistic and unconventional approach: incorporate Information Operations to counter drug trafficking and, indirectly, counter government corruption.

The lack of legitimate economic resources has enabled organized criminals to bribe police and other government authorities. Of course, this leads to corruption. The scale of the illicit trade in drugs, and the related amounts of money, was recently unveiled. On March 16, 2007, the General Attorney's Office and the Mexican Federal Police made the largest confiscation of illegal drug earnings in Mexican history: they confiscated over 200 million dollars, 200,000 euros and 157,500 pesos from a drug-trafficking organization related to methamphetamine production in Mexico City.¹³ Although no government officials were directly linked to that drug-trafficking organization, this case clearly illustrates the large amounts of money involved in illicit narcotic activities. As Laurie Freeman mentions:

The drug trade did not create the institutional problems that have long plagued Mexico, such as widespread corruption, ineffective and abusive police forces and prosecutors' offices, and a weak judiciary. But the drug trade does feed upon, magnify, and exacerbate these problems.¹⁴

In 1999, in an effort to counter the existing corruption among the police, the Mexican government created the Federal Preventive Police. This police force integrated members of the Army, Navy, Federal Highway Police, Fiscal Police, and the Interior Ministry's Center for Research and National Security. Initially, controversy surfaced about the legality of this decision because it seemed to contravene Article 129 of the Mexican Constitution. This specifies:

¹³ Hector Tobar and Carlos Martinez, "Mexico Meth Raid Yields \$205 million in U.S. Cash," *Los Angeles Times*, 17 March 2007, Home Edition, [journal online]; available from <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1235302401&sid=4&Fmt=3&clientId=11969&RQT=309&VName=PQD>; Internet; accessed 5 May 2007.

¹⁴ Laurie Freeman, "State of Siege: Drug-Related Violence and Corruption in Mexico," *Washington Office on Latin America*, June 1996 [web site]; available from http://www.wola.org/media/publications/english/mexico/mexico_state_of_siege_06.06.pdf; Internet; accessed 23 May 2007, 2.

In time of peace, no military authority may exercise more functions than those that have an exact connection with military discipline. There will only be fixed and permanent military commands in the forts, bases, and depots on which the Government of the Union depends, or in camps, quarters, or barracks established outside populated areas for the stationing of troops.¹⁵

Despite questioning the constitutional validity of assigning military units to work with the Federal Preventive Police, the Supreme Court ruled: “while the authorities require the support of the Army, and considering that the armed forces are at the order of the president, its participation in assignments dealing with public security are not in violation of constitutional provisions.”¹⁶

The outcome of this policy, however, has had dichotomous implications. The Mexican government has been accused of militarizing public security forces and criticized for the increased roles the military has assumed. Because of the populations’ negative experiences with military and police, these fears perpetuate. Nevertheless, the Mexican government has attempted to change its public security institutions and the negative perception of the population. The Federal Preventive Police is viewed as being more credible by infusing it with members of the military. Further, it does not hire from other police corporations that have been exposed to corruption. In 2001, the Mexican government took more measures to clean and strengthen the criminal justice system by creating the Federal Investigations Agency. This agency was created to replace the Federal Judicial Police who had a reputation for poor professionalism, illegal procedures, and corruption. The creation of this new police force is seen as a move toward creating a multi-skilled, investigative police force. It also avoids

¹⁵ H. Congreso de la Unión, “Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos [Political Constitution of the United Mexican States],” Article 129, fraction VI [Web site]; available from <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/1.pdf>; Internet; accessed 11 October 2007.

¹⁶ Jordi Diez and Ian Nicholls, *The Mexican Armed Forces in Transition* [book online.] (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2006); available from <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB638.pdf>; Internet; cited 21 March 2007, 39.

possible contamination from other corrupt government organizations.¹⁷ In December 2005, the Mexican government's success in developing a professionally reliable police force was tarnished: the Office of the Attorney General published a report confirming that "1,493 AFI agents (out of approximately 7,000) were under investigation for possible criminal activity and 457 were facing prosecution."¹⁸ This type of information reinforces the negative public perception of government institutions. It is in the best interest of criminal organizations to undermine credibility and to foster a negative image of law enforcement and judicial institutions.¹⁹ There is only one way to definitively change the image of the military and the police force involved in counter drug trafficking operations: change the way the police and the military operate vis-à-vis the general population. Therefore, the Mexican Armed Forces must be cognizant of human rights' issues to gain popular support. This theme is reinforced in Mexico's military: "virtually every [military] course, whether for privates or generals, includes a human rights component."²⁰ Clearly, the Mexican Armed Forces is aware of the public perception of Information Operations and human rights' violations.

E. MILITARY REGULATIONS RELEVANT TO INFORMATION OPERATIONS

The existence of Mexico's Armed Forces is rooted in Mexico's Constitution. Article 73 explicitly gives the Mexican Congress the power to raise and sustain the armed institutions of the Union -- Army, Navy, and Air force.²¹ This article also enables Congress to regulate the organization and service of the

¹⁷ Graham H. Turbiville Jr. "Mexico Replaces Federal Judicial Police." *Special Warfare* 14 (2001): 56.

¹⁸ Freeman, 15.

¹⁹ Freeman, 16.

²⁰ Diez and Nicholls, 26.

²¹ H. Congreso de la Unión, "Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos [Political Constitution of the United Mexican States]," Article 73, fraction XIV [Web site]; available from <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/1.pdf>; Internet; accessed 11 October 2007.

country's military institutions. Additionally, Article 89 authorizes the President of the Republic to use all the country's Armed Forces to guarantee internal safety and exterior defense of the Federation.²² Therefore, Mexico's Executive and Congressional powers have the inherent right to use the Armed Forces domestically. Still, public discourse often criticizes the government for abusing this power. Finally, in March 1996, the Supreme Court ended the controversy about the legality of the military's participation in internal matters: it ruled that "the law and the constitution were not violated when the Army was used for public safety purposes."²³

F. MEXICO'S POLITICAL SYSTEM

Perhaps the main reason why the Mexican military establishment does not have an Information Operations capability is the nature of Mexico's political system. The system derived out of the Mexican Revolution: after the end of the Porfirio Diaz era in 1911, it was common for groups to fight for control of the government. Not until 1929 did the different forces of the revolution consolidate under one political institution -- the founding of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) by Plutarco Elías Calles. The PNR evolved into the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). It became Mexico's "official" party which operated as a "true hegemonic party in the sense that, having itself achieved a *de facto* monopoly over the country's political life, opposition parties were always legally recognized."²⁴ The recognition of other political institutions as part of a multi-party political model is important in establishing a democratic state. In reality, the concentration of power in the "official" party allowed it to establish institutions and to develop procedures that permeated almost every

²² H. Congreso de la Unión, "Constitución Política de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos [Political Constitution of the United Mexican States]," Article 89, fraction VI; available from <http://www.diputados.gob.mx/LeyesBiblio/pdf/1.pdf>; Internet; accessed 11 October 2007.

²³ Angel Gustavo Lopez-Montiel. "The Military, Political Power, and Police Relations in Mexico City," *Latin American Perspectives* 27 (2000): 83.

²⁴ Kevin J. Middlebrook, ed., *Dilemmas of political change in Mexico*. (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 2004), 57.

aspect of Mexican society. This omnipresent dynamic of the "official" political party allowed it to rule the country for seventy-one years.²⁵ According to Dr. George Philip, Professor of Comparative and Latin American Politics at the London School of Economics and Political Science, this system also allowed "the political authorities to combine arbitrariness with the principle of representation and to manoeuvre [sic] with flexibility without compromising the reality of concentrated power."²⁶ The dynamic of a hegemonic political party allowed the government to achieve control "through subtle political strategies emphasizing co-optation and mollification."²⁷ According to Martin Needler, the system ran in part:

On the basis of rewards and punishments....[and] through the manipulation of the symbols of legitimacy by means of indoctrination and propaganda directed at the population as a whole; and through securing the loyalty of the natural constituency of the ruling class...by means of co-optation, through recruitment, into the ruling group itself.²⁸

The government's new structure and the president's ability to select the members of his cabinet created the basis for a tight-working group. Most of the time, it relied on personal relationships. This gave rise to the propensity of corruption.

In the 1980s, the country and the Mexican party system began experiencing significant changes when opposition parties emerged. According to Mónica Serrano, the significance of this transformation is "while in the past the main function of opposition [political] parties was to legitimise [sic] the regime and contain conflict, they gradually emerged as key channels for 'expressing public

²⁵ In 2000, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) at the end of President Ernesto Zedillo's administration handed power to Vicente Fox from the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN).

²⁶ George Philip, ed., *Politics in Mexico*. (Beckenham: Croom Helm, 1985), 54.

²⁷ Dale Story, *The Mexican Ruling Party*. (New York: Praeger, 1986), 6.

²⁸ Martin C. Needler, *Mexican Politics: The Containment of Conflict*. (New York: Praeger, 1990), 75.

discontent with economic policy and political performance".²⁹ The relevance of these democratic channels became evident in 2001, when Vicente Fox Quesada of the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) won the presidential election breaking the seventy-one year and eleven-term political barrier.

The most significant legacy of the Mexican Revolution is Mexico's 1917 Constitution. Today it remains the country's Magna Carta. Not until the late 1920s did the government implement many of the revolutionary ideals outlined in the Constitution. As the government redistributed land to peasants and farmers, nationalized the oil industry, established the Social Security Institute, favored labor unions, and protected national industries, it gradually began to restrict the action of the military. Even though the military remained the armed pillar of the government, Mexico was not besieged with threats or reasons to invest significant resources that into supporting its social projects. Since Mexico declared war against the Axis Powers during the Second World War, it saw the need to strengthen its military power.³⁰ After this conflict, the position of Mexico's government towards its military was dominated by adherence to the Estrada Doctrine. Its principles were based on non-intervention and self-determination of the people. This "golden rule" doctrine ensured national stability by non-interference with other countries' internal issues and by the hope that other countries would reciprocate. Until 1994, this seemed to work. Then the administration of Carlos Salinas de Gortari signed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada. NAFTA symbolized the opportunity for Mexico to leave the Third World and enter the First World of international economic stability. President Vicente Fox furthered the globalization process by saying that "the integration process should not be

²⁹ Mónica Serrano, ed., *Governing Mexico: Political Parties and Elections*. (London: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1998), 7.

³⁰ On May 22, 1942, President Manuel Ávila Camacho declared war against the Axis of Power after German submarines attacked the Mexican ships *Potrero del Llano* and *Faja de Oro* in the Gulf of Mexico.

restricted to the economy; it should also include politics and, most importantly, international security, an area where states can show commitment."³¹

The Mexican political system was founded by radical military leaders who fought in the Mexican Revolution and created the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR). This allowed the Mexican military to play a prominent role in the incipient political life of the country.³² Until the 1940s, it also continued the pattern of civil-military-political relationships established during the government of Porfirio Díaz.³³ In Mexico, the hegemonic nature of the political regime gave place to atypical linkage between the country's main political actor and the military. As Roderic Camp describes it:

Given the monopoly of a one-party system, the Mexican military's only ally was the Mexican state or the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) that had dominated the state since 1929. The military was never drawn into political conflicts with other parties, for either personal or ideological reasons...³⁴

After the end of the revolution, the government stabilized the country and ended internal conflicts by using its essential tool -- the military. Furthermore, to govern, the government needed the support of the military. In the organization of the Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM) during the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas del Río when the PNR was transformed into a "corporatist structure organized around four functional sectors -- the afore-mentioned labor, peasants, popular sectors, and the military," the relevance of the military became evident.³⁵ According to Camp, Cárdenas' intention was to "balance the military against the agrarian and labor sectors within the party and thus lessen its overall political

³¹ Ernesto Encinas Valenzuela, "'Hacer o no hacer' [To do or not to do] Mexican Foreign Policy and UN Peacekeeping Operations in the 21st Century," (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2006), 4.

³² Except for the provisional presidency of Emilio Portes Gil from 1928 to 1930, after the assassination of president elect Álvaro Obregón, it was not until 1946 that Mexico elected a president, Miguel Alemán, with no military background.

³³ Roderic Ai Camp, *Politics in Mexico*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 37.

³⁴ Middlebrook, *Dilemmas of political change in Mexico*, 367.

³⁵ Story, 25.

influence."³⁶ To prevent the military from gaining relevance in national politics, he also purged the Army of its most politicized elements and created two separate ministries in 1939. This split the National Defense: it combined the Army and Air force and, on the other hand, the Navy.³⁷ However, the successor of Cárdenas, Manuel Ávila Camacho, went even further to separate the military from policy: he rescinded the inclusion of the military as a sector of the PRM. He made this decision despite being the last Army general elected president of Mexico.³⁸ According to Dr. Dale Story, Professor of Political Science at the University of Texas, Ávila Camacho "was aware of the controversy surrounding the military's role in the party, wanted to emphasize the apolitical status of the armed forces, and believed that the political activities of individual soldiers would harm military cohesion."³⁹

It is essential to highlight that gradually "the role of the armed forces in politics had visibly diminished ... presidents, state governors, and cabinet members frequently used to be military officers."⁴⁰ Needler identifies the reasons for this dynamic as diminishing the prospects of a successful military revolt, to professionalize the military, and to facilitate economic development. However, because the military assumed the mission of drug interception and eradication, the participation of the military in civil-police matters increased during the administrations of Miguel de la Madrid Hurtado and Carlos Salinas de Gortari. However, during the administration of Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León, the involvement of the military in civil-police matters increased most significantly.

As a result, when the Armed Forces were assigned to civil authorities, public discourse about the Forces' mission and degree of domestic participation spiked. The participation of the military in civil-police matters had the adverse

³⁶ Camp, 128.

³⁷ Story, 99.

³⁸ Needler, 27-28.

³⁹ Story, 28.

⁴⁰ Needler, 5.

consequence of exposing the military to criticism. This damaged the military's image.⁴¹ In response to this unforeseen consequence, Mexican Armed Forces emphasized human rights' training and established rules of engagement. Despite isolated cases of corruption and excessive use of force, most Mexicans consider the Mexican Armed Forces as an honorable and trustworthy institution. As Jordi Diez describes it:

In Mexico the military is one of the most respected of national institutions among the population, and one on which many Mexicans depend, especially in rural [and costal] areas, for help such as the delivery of medical services and natural disaster relief.⁴²

1. As it Relates to the Mexican Navy

The Mexican Navy as well as the rest of the Mexican military establishment has focused on what Jordi Diez call an "inward orientation," focusing almost entirely on internal matters such as drug trafficking and crime.⁴³ The evolution of the Mexican Armed Forces was assisted by the fact that interstate warfare is hardly a realistic probability in the region.⁴⁴ Nevertheless, after the terrorist attacks perpetrated on September 11, 2001 against the United States, it became evident that terrorist organizations could attack anywhere to disrupt the economy and politics of the United States.⁴⁵ Mexico was among the many countries affected by these terrorist actions. It realized its delicate position as a commercial partner and oil provider to the United States and, hence, its potential as a target for terrorist actions. In July 2007, according to data from the Energy Information Administration, Mexico was the second-largest supplier of

⁴¹ For more information about this, see: Angel Gustavo Lopez-Montiel. "The Military, Political Power, and Police Relations in Mexico City," *Latin American Perspectives* 27, (2000).

⁴² Diez and Nicholls, 3.

⁴³ Diez and Nicholls, 20.

⁴⁴ Needler, 79.

⁴⁵ Subsequent terrorist attacks were conducted in Madrid, Spain on March 11, 2004; and in London, United Kingdom, on July 7, 2005.

crude oil to the United States, behind Canada.⁴⁶ Three-quarters of Mexico's oil now comes from offshore sites in Campeche Sound in the Gulf of Mexico – the responsibility of the Mexican Navy.⁴⁷

In response to these terrorist activities, the Mexican Navy increased its operational tempo to protect strategic installations. Additionally, the operating expenses of the Mexican Navy increased significantly: it has acquired new equipment and technology for its operations. The Mexican Government spends significant money to meet international anti-terrorist security standards and measures -- especially those established by the United Nations' (UN) International Conventions, the International Maritime Organization (OMI), and the United States of America. An unintended benefit of the increase in security and surveillance was that the Navy made more drug seizures. Additionally, the augmented surveillance by the Mexican Navy has reduced illegal immigration into Mexico.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Energy Information Administration, "U.S. imports by country of origins," 28 September 2007 [web site], available from http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/dnav/pet/pet_move_impcus_a2_nus_ep00_im0_mbbi_m.htm; Internet; accessed 10 October 2007.

⁴⁷ José N. Iturriaga, "Oil rigs in Campeche Sound," *México desconocido*, Autumn 1998. [journal online]; available from http://www.mexicodesconocido.com.mx/english/cultura_y_sociedad/actividades_economicas/detalle.cfm?idsec=17&idsub=85&idpag=1305; Internet; accessed 27 July 2006.

⁴⁸ During 2006, the Mexican Navy worked with the National Migration Institute detaining 263 illegal aliens. For more information see: Secretaría de Marina-Armada de México, Consejo del Almirantazgo, "Informe de labores 2006," [web site]; available from http://www.semar.gob.mx/transparencia/informe_labores_2006.pdf; Internet; accessed 20 August 2007, 33.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Deception and Psychological Operations have always been used to deceive an enemy and to influence him to take certain actions that favor the deceiver. When supported by additional measures to keep the enemy from gaining information about the forces or intentions of its rival, The chances of success for these operations are significantly increased. Despite its common use against enemies from other states, the principles and components of Information Operations can be used within a state to optimize limited capabilities. In 1930, Mexico adopted the Estrada Doctrine to guide its foreign policy based on principles of non-intervention and self-determination of the people.⁴⁹ According to Martin C. Needler:

The Estrada Doctrine stipulates that countries should extend diplomatic recognition to all *de facto* governments of other countries, without concerning themselves about whether such governments have the [lawful] status.⁵⁰

The adherence to these principles has prevented Mexico from becoming involved in disputes with other countries. The geo-strategic location of Mexico automatically places it under the *de facto* umbrella of U.S. protection "causing the Mexican military to focus on internal defense."⁵¹ The Mexican Navy identifies the need to defend national sovereignty, protect strategic installations, control maritime traffic, protect national resources, maintain the state of law, protect life at sea, and sponsor national maritime development. The most significant challenges for the Mexican military are those related to counter drug trafficking and revolutionary insurgencies capable of conducting acts of terrorism. Both

⁴⁹ Named after the Mexican Secretary of Foreign Affairs in 1930, Genaro Estrada.

⁵⁰ Needler, 117.

⁵¹ Diez and Nicholls, 21.

challenges present opportunities for the implementation of Information Operations strategies to optimize the use of untraditional resources to support military objectives.

This chapter presents the organization of this investigation, describes the theories used to study insurgencies and counterinsurgencies, as well as the theories used to understand the response of the Mexican Navy. This chapter also highlights the relevance of Information Operations as an instrument of policy.

A. METHODOLOGY AND ORGANIZATION

Since the end of the Second World War, there have been many studies of how adversaries have used different types of deception, denial, and counter deception against each other. The concept of Information Operations, as it exists, is the result of practical lessons learned in combat and subsequent studies and theories. This study uses historical data and contemporary information to investigate Information Operations, focusing on its psychological operations component and its use to support government actions, as well as military and political objectives.

This thesis focuses on Mexico's military ability to deal with future irregular threats. Since it is a Latin American country with similar military capabilities, we have selected Colombia as a case study. Colombia also shares many of the same national security concerns as Mexico and uses its military to counter such threats. For instance, the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas is an assertion of pre-Colombian ideas and practices filtered through a complex history of uneven capitalist development. Furthermore, the drug cartels and insurgent movements have also paralleled each other. However, this thesis does not necessarily advocate the Colombian counterinsurgency model and agrees that Colombia and Mexico are not entirely parallel comparisons.

Chapter I introduces the overall study and describes the Mexican Armed Forces, and particularly the role of the Mexican Navy. This chapter also presents a concise history of the Mexican political system, as well as the opportunities and challenges for the Mexican Armed Forces.

Chapter II presents the insurgency and counterinsurgency model developed by Dr. Gordon H. McCormick as the theoretical framework to understand the interaction of the state, the counter-state or insurgency, the population, and the external actors. It also uses Irving Janis' conceptual models of groupthink to identify the reasons why the creation of an Information Operations capability has not been considered. Finally, it shows the importance of Information Operations as an instrument of policy.

Chapter III presents an in depth case study of Colombia in relation to the development of Information Operation capabilities. It also illustrates how it is used to support its policies and attain its desired objectives. Further, this chapter presents a concise case study of Mexico and describes how the country has managed its challenges without an established Information Operations capability.

Chapter IV makes recommendations derived from the McCormick Model of Counterinsurgency for implementation in Mexico. This chapter also offers Information Operations propositions relevant to Mexico's Armed Forces and outlines the reasons of why Mexico's Navy should take the lead in implementing these types of operations. Finally, this chapter highlights the main points of this thesis and summarizes the recommendations that will assist Mexico in dealing with the nation's rising unconventional threats.

1. McCormick's Model of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

This thesis uses the insurgency and counterinsurgency model developed by Gordon H. McCormick⁵² to frame the unconventional strategy and the use of

⁵² Dr. McCormick, Chair, Naval Postgraduate School Defense Analysis Department, developed the Model of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in 1994.

Information Operations by the state. This model offers a better understanding of how an insurgency works, as well as the interaction and relations among the different actors involved.

McCormick's Model of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency, also known as the Mystic Diamond, is an analytical tool that models the struggle of the state versus the counter state. This model considers four different actors: the state, the counter state or insurgency, the population (endogeny), and international actors (exogeny). The first actor, the state, is understood as the current government or occupying force in a certain country or region that is forced to deal with the insurgency. The second actor, the counter state or insurgency, essentially consists of those members of an insurgent guerrilla movement or group that challenges the status quo of the state. It also consists of those individuals, groups or organizations that passively or actively support the insurgent force and obstruct the action of the state. The main objective of the counter state is to overthrow the current government or occupying forces by any means available to establish a new government. The third actor, the population, consists of all non-combatant and neutral individuals within a disputed territory that have the capability to support either the state or counter state. The last actor, the international actors, are those external nation states, international organizations, or Non-Governmental (NGO's) actors, capable of taking sides or already involved in the struggle between the state and the counter state. In this era of global communications and transnational economic interests, the state and the insurgency usually receive support from international actors who are protecting their particular interests.

The versatility of McCormick's model allows it to be subdivided into two variants. The first variant is when the insurgency happens within a state and does not have any support from an external actor. In this case, the state deals with the pure insurgency since there are no external sources of influence involved in the struggle. The second variant of the Mystic Diamond appears when the insurgency receives support from an external actor in its struggle

against the state. In this case, insurgents become partisans supported by an external actor. This thesis uses the Model of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency in its most complete form, using both variants to analyze the interaction of populations and external actors as they relate to the insurgency and the state.

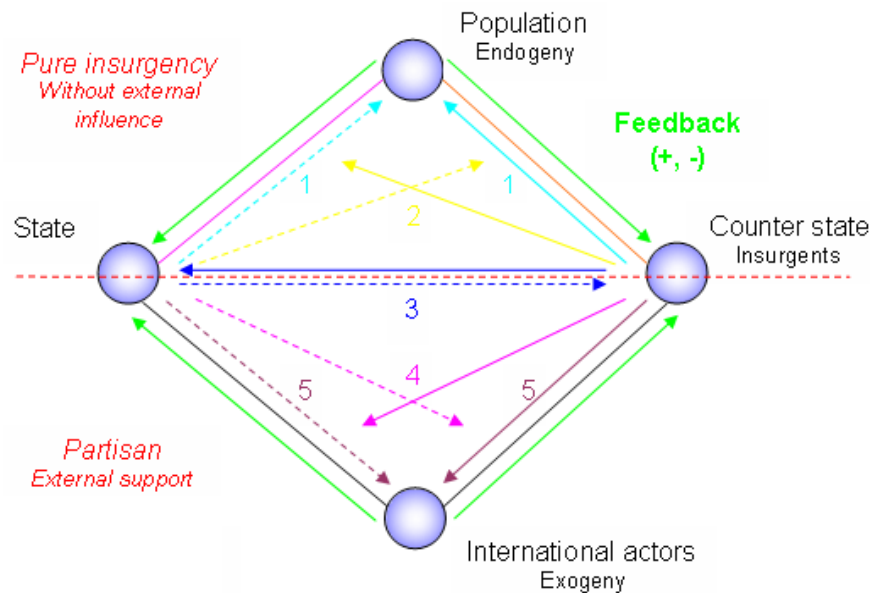


Figure 1. McCormick's model of insurgency.

From: Gordon H. McCormick, *Seminar in Guerrilla Warfare* Lecture Notes, (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, Summer Quarter 2006).

The model developed by McCormick visualizes the insurgency problem as integrated by two dynamic interdependent systems -- one represented by the state and the other by the insurgents or counter state -- that interact in a zero-sum game to control the population and the political space. According to this model, both actors compete to gain the support and control of the population while depriving the adversary of the same benefit. The competition between the state and the insurgency is a dynamic process that takes place within existing geo-political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. Nevertheless, the conditions that govern this asymmetric fight between the state and the guerrillas

are: the government begins the struggle with a significant force advantage over the guerrillas; the guerrillas have an indubitable information advantage over most governments. The advantage of the latter rests on its capability of constantly gathering information about the government and using it as propaganda. Essentially, while the guerrilla can easily see the government, it is almost impossible for the government to see the guerrilla. The guerrilla can easily level the force disadvantage by exploiting its information warfare capabilities. Therefore, the challenge to the government is to transcend its force advantage into an information advantage. Nevertheless, the guerrilla is in a better position to control the assisted preferences of the population because they are embedded among them and know them better than the government. Rather than the impersonal level of communications that most governments aspire to have, specifically Mexico, embedding allows the guerrillas to establish better communication with the people.

a. *Operational Strategies for Both Players*

According to McCormick's insurgency model, the interaction of different actors is such that "individual actions [taken by any one of them] can have multiple effects"⁵³ on each other. This will be described in depth later in this chapter. As a result, several strategies can be derived from the Diamond Model structure. The arrows and numbers on McCormick's model of insurgency (figure 1) represent the different operational strategies.

According to McCormick's Model, the state and the insurgent have the same five strategies available. This will be explained in detail later in this chapter. Usually the fight begins with the strategy of gaining support of the population (strategy 1), gradually evolving to the strategy of disrupting the control of the opponent over the population (strategy 2), and, ultimately, taking direct action against the adversary (strategy 3). Nevertheless, these three strategies

⁵³ Gordon McCormick, *Seminar in Guerrilla Warfare* class notes (Naval Postgraduate School, Summer 2006).

are usually complemented by simultaneously working on gaining the favor of the international community (strategy 4), and, once achieved, disrupting the support of the international community for the opponent (strategy 5).

(1) Gain the Support of the Population. The support of the population is a fundamental feature in the struggle against an adversary. In the case of the state, it is the support of the population that enables the state to gain insight and information about the insurgency and its activities. When a population does not assist the government with information about the insurgency, it inadvertently supports the insurgency. The lack of sufficient and appropriate information about the insurgency directly affects the capability of the state to respond to the insurgent threat. However, when a population cooperates with the government by providing information about the insurgency, the government is better equipped to deal with the insurgency. Therefore, it is in the government's best interest to obtain the population's support to effectively counter an insurgency. According to Dr. McCormick, "no matter how weak the state is, with appropriate information it can destroy the insurgency."⁵⁴ Meanwhile, for the insurgency, the population also represents a valuable asset since it can provide information about the activities of the state, and supply the insurgency with weapons and economic resources to support the cause. Most significantly, the population provides the insurgency with an active environment that gives insurgents the opportunity to blend with the population and to hide from the actions of the state. The relationship of the counter state and the population is so personal that any part of the population not controlled by the government is likely to be controlled by insurgents. The insurgency expects to gain force multipliers, while the state looks to gain popular support. Vital is the fact that the behavior of both actors towards the population is subject to constant change based on the feedback obtained from the interaction with the population.

⁵⁴ Gordon McCormick, *Seminar in Guerrilla Warfare* class notes (Naval Postgraduate School, Summer 2006).

Ultimately for both actors, obtaining the support of the population is the most significant and decisive factor to win. Finally, the use of mass media is a significant tool in achieving this step.

(2) Disrupt the Control of the Opponent over the Population. Since the population's support is significant in overcoming an adversary, afflicting the relationship of the opponent with the populace constitutes an essential objective in the struggle between the state and the counter state. To achieve this, both adversaries constantly try to damage the opponent's relationship with the population and, thus, to delegitimize its authority. Therefore, it is essential for both sides to maintain legitimacy to be able to control and gain the sympathy of the population.

(3) Direct Action. Eventually, as the two adversaries gain strength, gather support from the population and information about each other, they are able to launch direct attacks against one another. These actions aim to disrupt the enemy's operations, destroy, or capture forces, and weaken the resolution to continue fighting. Nevertheless, the support of the population remains essential for success.

(4) Compete for the Favor of the International Community. In this dynamic struggle between the state and the insurgency, it is essential for both adversaries to have the support of an external actor. As a consequence, both actors are constantly trying to legitimize their positions to gain and maintain the support from external actors. The strategy of competing for the favor of the international community is also subject to constant change based on the feedback obtained from the interaction with the external actors.

(5) Disrupt the Support from the International Community to the Opponent. When an external actor is involved in the struggle between the state and the insurgency, it is essential for both opponents to delegitimize their respective enemy in the eyes of the international community to deprive it from its support. In this zero-sum game, the support of an external actor is a very

significant factor for the state and the insurgency: it directly affects the outcome. The strategy of disrupting support from the international community constantly changes and is dependent on the feedback obtained from the interaction with external actors.

B. ALLISON AND ZELIKOW'S CONCEPTUAL MODELS AND GROUPTHINK FRAMEWORK

The concept of “Information Operations” has evolved within the military as a result of the need to optimize the use of human and material resources to indirectly influence the enemy. This type of operation is mostly used by the military establishments of those countries that have developed the technological resources and expertise to integrate efforts to influence an adversary. Previously, these were carried out almost in an independent manner, but now operations encompass a diversity of operations that have been integrated with new developments in information technology. Despite the proven success of Information Operations, many countries have not tried to develop such capabilities. In some cases, the reason for not developing this capability is budgetary; in others it rests on a lack of understating of its advantages. In the case of the Mexican Navy, the development of an Information Operations capability has been constrained by both factors. Currently, the Mexican Navy does not have a specialized unit capable of conducting Information Operations. If the Mexican Navy were to develop such a capability, it could further strengthen its cooperation with other government agencies.

To understand the reasons why the Mexican Navy has not developed an Information Operations capability, we use the concepts presented by Graham Allison and Phillip Zelikow in their book *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*. The authors present three different conceptual models to try to understand how, at the different levels of government, decisions are made and who is involved. These conceptual models are: Rational Actor Model, Organizational Behavior Model, and Governmental Politics Model. The rigor of

these models derives from the assumption that actions are taken as a result of rational choices among different possibilities and outcomes. The rational choice model implies there is a rational thought and decision process that cherishes “consistency among goals and objectives relative to a particular action; consistency in the application of principles in order to select the optimal alternative.”⁵⁵ These different models of rational action consider four core concepts in the decision making process: goals and objectives, alternatives, consequences, and choice. Each of them represents a different aspect in the decision making process. In this context, the rationality of the process refers to the “consistent, value maximizing choice within specified constraints.”⁵⁶

The point of the Rational Actor Model is to offer an explanation and “show how the nation or government could have chosen to act as it did, given the strategic problems it faced.”⁵⁷ This model assumes the government is the primary actor in the decision making process: it makes its decisions based on its goals and the potential payoff of each decision before deciding a specific course of action. In other words, “governments are anthropomorphized as if they were individuals.”⁵⁸ In this model, the government, as a unified cohesive entity, makes its decisions based on maximizing its means toward the state’s ends. To apply the Rational Actor Model to the Mexican Navy, we assume that it is the primary actor in the decision making process; also that the Mexican Navy identified, examined, and assessed the different courses of action available to maximize its ability to achieve the states’ strategic goals and objectives. The goals and objectives of the Mexican Navy are derived from its mission as specified in the Mexican Constitution -- to use the naval power of the Federation for external

⁵⁵ Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 5th ed. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1998), 17.

⁵⁶ Allison and Zelikow, 18.

⁵⁷ Allison and Zelikow, 4.

⁵⁸ Allison and Zelikow, 144.

defense and to help in the internal security of the country.⁵⁹ Throughout its history, most of the Mexican Navy's goals and objectives have been related to the preservation of juridical order at sea, protection of fisheries, protection of strategic installations, and protection of human life at sea.

Some of the most significant threats that the Mexican Navy encounters today are related to drug trafficking. Nevertheless, there are other threats that arise when the institution operates in support of other civilian agencies. An example of such threats can be seen in the uprising of the Zapatista movement. Prior to the appearance of the Zapatista insurgency in the southern state of Chiapas, neither military nor civilian government agencies possessed the capability to counter the innovative information campaign of the Zapatista movement. According to Roderic Ai Camp:

Although the military had provided accurate intelligence on the Zapatistas' activities long before their surprise attack, civilian intelligence authorities in the Secretariat of Government either chose to ignore that information or convinced themselves that they could delay resolving festering conflicts in the region, despite evidence to the contrary.⁶⁰

The lack of this capability allowed the Zapatistas to exploit the criticism that already existed towards the Mexican government. This contributed to making the government appear authoritarian, uninterested in the well-being of indigenous people, and disrespectful of human rights.

Thus far, the Mexican Navy has not given proper attention to the development of an Information Operations capability. This is a consequence of the perception that the Navy is not designed to conduct operations to influence the perception of the Mexican population. Another factor that has prevented the Mexican Navy from appreciating the need for developing an Information

⁵⁹ Secretaría de Marina. "Ley Orgánica de la Armada de México [Organic Law of the Mexican Navy]," Article 1 [web site]; available from http://www.semar.gob.mx/juridico/org_armada.htm; Internet; accessed 15 August 2007.

⁶⁰ Camp, 131.

Operations capability is that Navy currently does its job well. Thus, there is no need to change or to seek additional capabilities. Additionally, the Navy does not want to attract the attention of politicians, opposing political parties, or to encourage unpopular support. The Mexican Navy chooses to remain in the sea environment and avoids becoming involved in potential conflicts over interests with other government agencies -- especially the Mexican Army.

The Organizational Behavior Model considers governmental actions as outputs of large organizations functioning according to regular patterns of behavior. This is partially coordinated by government leaders.⁶¹ This model explains the conduct of organizations using its purposes, practices, and characteristics of its members.⁶² This model is directly related to the role of organizations in modern global society. There are many organizations that expand their influence beyond the borders of the state, making their headquarters there. They have more economic power than many developing countries. Modern society is based on the existence of increasingly more complex organizations that sometimes interact to obtain organizational output.

Applying the Organizational Behavior Model to the case of the Mexican Navy identifies that this organization is not an individual, but, rather, a large collection of people, departments, and divisions whose actions are limited by their standard patterns of behavior. In this conceptual model, the differences in the outcome of the organization are influenced by the priorities and perceptions of the different components. Within this context, each administrative and operational part of the Mexican Navy has, to some degree, been reluctant to assume the new responsibility of designing an Information Operations capability. The various entities within the Mexican Navy believe that their current public relationships suffice the needs of the public and their leadership. Meanwhile, the operational units think that most of what they do is specialized. They also think that their interactions with the population are enough to shape the public's

⁶¹ Allison and Zelikow, 143.

⁶² Allison and Zelikow, 144.

perception of the institution. Consequently, the priorities of the Mexican Navy are shaped to focus on the satisfaction of its operational aspects -- rather than on influencing the perception of the population.

The public relations' units of the Mexican Navy react to the social and political dynamics prevalent in the country. As a result, a significant part of the activities of the public relations unit is directed to informing the people about the activities of the Mexican Navy. The impact of this on the population is questionable, particularly when compared to the influence of opposing political parties, reports from the media, and the mistrust of the population caused by the negative perception of governmental actions. From the organization's perspective, another aspect that seems to influence the lack of interest in developing additional capabilities is that the organization seems to be "working right." Thus, there is no need to seek additional tasks that will eventually represent additional responsibilities. Furthermore, when the need arises, the institution seeks a solution within the existing options available, settling on one that adequately addresses the tasks at hand. By not trying to overextend its assets and resources to achieve too many goals, the Mexican Navy has adopted a conservative and prudent strategy in dealing with the different issues that it faces. This strategy is the result of the established Standard Operating Procedures and conformity within the existing organization.

The Governmental Politics Model considers government action as the result of the interaction between players in key positions within the government. In this model, the outcome can be understood as the bargaining "among the players positioned hierarchically within the government."⁶³ Within this dynamic, sometimes the course of action favored by one group is imposed on the rest. At other times; the course of action chosen is the result of the interaction among the different actors involved in the decision making process.

⁶³ Allison and Zelikow, 255.

De-escalating the Governmental Politics Model to apply it to an organization, we are able to identify the different groups that interact in what appears, to them, to be the best possible outcome. As in any organization, within the Mexican Navy there is a certain degree of competition -- among the different units, areas, divisions, and departments -- to increase their influence among their respective leaders and, ultimately, increase the power of the individual organization. Nevertheless, the military hierarchy that exists throughout the Mexican Navy, and most military institutions, limits the amount and kind of influence that a subordinate can have on the upper echelons of the organization. This is particularly relevant because most of the time the same actors are the ones that have access to the Secretary of the Navy. They are more likely to have a larger influence on a final decision. Essentially, these different actors focused on attaining the goals of their particular areas. They did not want to propose the establishment of something that lacked support from other relevant actors within the organization -- or that presented a potential for future criticism.

Another useful work that complements the understanding of the decision making process, at government level or within organizations, is the work of Irving Janis: the theory of groupthink. This theory describes how the members of a group try to reach consensus by minimizing conflict. In the process, they fail to critically test, analyze, and evaluate the different actions available and the possible consequences of each of them. Eventually, they end up with a less than optimal solution. A characteristic of this type of dynamic is that, for the sake of attaining consensus, the members of the group fail to present viewpoints that might be unwelcomed by the rest of the group. Thus, the members of the group auto-censure their opinions to assure acceptance by the rest of the group. In this context, Janis presents eight symptoms to identify groupthink, which are:

- An illusion of invulnerability, shared by most or all members, which creates excessive optimism and encourages taking extreme risks;
- Collective efforts to discount warnings which might lead the members to reconsider their assumptions before they recommit themselves to their past policy decisions;

- An unquestioned belief in the group's inherent morality, inclining the members to ignore the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions;
- Stereotyped views of enemy leaders as too evil to warrant genuine attempts to negotiate, or as too weak to counter whatever risky attempts are made to defeat their purposes;
- Direct pressure on any member who expresses strong arguments against any of the group's stereotypes, illusions, or commitments, making clear that this type of dissent is contrary to what is expected of all loyal members;
- Self-censorship of deviations or the apparent group consensus, reflecting each member's inclination to minimize to himself the importance of his doubts and counterarguments;
- A shared illusion of unanimity concerning judgments conforming to the majority view;
- The emergence of self-appointed mindguards to protect the group from adverse information that might affect the complacency of the group.⁶⁴

1. Framework Analysis

The principles of non-intervention and self-determination by the people expressed in the Estrada Doctrine have shaped and guided Mexican foreign policy -- as well as the role of its Armed forces. In the past, whenever it has been necessary to deal with internal problems, the Mexican government usually has chosen to befriend its potential adversaries. According to Dale Story, this strategy is a positive-sum game that benefits everyone. The difficulty of this strategy is that "only a certain amount of rewards or benefits can be distributed before crossing the unacceptable limits of granting too much power to the opposition."⁶⁵ Political co-option as a form of Information Operation proved useful for the Mexican government to influence public opinion to support its actions and preserve tranquility. Nevertheless, the lack of a systematic Information Operations campaigns, combined with the inability of the state to

⁶⁴ Irving Janis, *Victims of Groupthink: A psychological study of foreign-policy decisions and fiascoes*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), 197-198.

⁶⁵ Story, 67.

satisfy the increasing demands of some sectors of the population, failed to assure social stability. Even though political co-optation was useful for the government to deal in the short term with some issues, its focus had the adverse consequence: preventing the development of other capabilities that would have been useful to counter the information campaigns launched by the Zapatistas after the 1994 uprising.

The use of the three conceptual models developed by Allison and Zelikow present a useful tool to understand the reasons why the Mexican Navy has not developed an Information Operations capability.

Each one of these conceptual models offers a different perspective from which to consider the question. The Rational Actor Model illustrates that the Mexican Navy, as a rational decision maker, taking into consideration its goals and objectives, chose not to develop an Information Operations capability to continue operating predominantly in the sea environment. The Navy avoided getting involved in potential conflicts over interests with other government agencies.

The Organizational Behavior model shows that because the adherence of different units, departments, and divisions to their respective Standard Operating Procedures,⁶⁶ each does not visualize the need to develop an additional Information Operations capability. Each entity tended to solve problems in the routine way that had worked on previous occasions. Ultimately, the decision of the Mexican Navy not to develop an Information Operations capability was the result of the established Standard Operating Procedures and conformity with the existing procedures -- rather than a choice made on purpose -- and the best selection among the available courses of action.

⁶⁶ On January 16, 2002, the Mexican Navy established a Quality Control Committee [Comité Directivo de Calidad Total] to implement and review the quality of standards procedures (ISO 9000/2000). For more information see: Secretaría de Marina [Secretariat of the Navy], "Comunicado de prensa [Press release] 006/02," 16 January 2002 [web site]; available from http://www.semar.gob.mx/boletin/2002/bol_006_02.htm; Internet; accessed 20 August 2007.

Finally, the Governmental Politics Model argues that the additional Information Operations capability was not developed due to lack of support or interest from different relevant actors and groups who may have influenced the decision making within the organization.

Assuming that the Mexican Navy has the resources and training available, we assume that the Mexican Navy has not realized the need to develop an Information Operations capability. This perception is reinforced by the fact that relevant actors and groups, who influence the decision-making process within the organization, have focused predominantly on operating in a sea environment; also, they are focused on applying the existent Standard Operating Procedures which do not consider the development of an Information Operations capability.

The interaction of military actors within the hierarchical structure of the Mexican Navy has the propensity of using their institutional thinking. This often results in a groupthink product. This dynamic is further encouraged by the constant need to deal with budget constraints and personnel limitations.

C. IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION OPERATIONS AS AN INSTRUMENT OF POLICY

The relevance of Information Operations as an instrument of policy resides in its potential to support, optimize, and magnify government actions and to shape an adversary's behavior to facilitate reaching one's own strategic objective. According to the authoritative publication on U.S. Information Operations (Joint Publication 3-13, Information Operations), these types of operations are considered integral to the successful execution of military operations. This is because the main goal is to "achieve and maintain information superiority for the U.S. and its allies."⁶⁷

When properly used, Information Operations allows the user of such techniques to effectively target the hearts and minds of the objective audience to

⁶⁷ Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Information Operations: Joint Publication 3-13," I-1.

influence its behavior according to the user's best interests. Dr. Kalev I. Sepp, Assistant Professor of Defense Analysis at the Naval Postgraduate School, highlights the relevance of winning the ideological war in any operation:

The focus of all civil and military plans and operations must be on the center of gravity in any conflict—the country's people and their belief in and support of their government. Winning their hearts and minds must be the objective of the government's efforts.⁶⁸

The versatility of Information Operations can be used to strengthen, coordinate, and to unify government efforts towards the population to attain objectives. Nevertheless, it seems that the term "Information Operations," particularly when referring to the psychological operations component, tends to scare most populations about the possibility of being manipulated by the state. Just as Ensign Wrona conveys in her thesis:

Persuading rather than compelling physically, PSYOP relies on logic, fear, desire, or other mental factors to promote specific emotions, attitudes, or behaviors. When properly employed, PSYOP can reduce an adversary's will to fight. The intended purpose of PSYOP is to influence the targeted audience to take certain actions based on the information and indicators provided.⁶⁹

Despite the mistrust of some population sectors towards the government, seldom does the population think about the possibility that their skepticism and hostility towards the state is the product of an Information Operations campaign launched by somebody else. Developing countries are constantly struggling to allocate scarce and limited resources to meet the increasing needs of the population. Despite government actions to optimize resources available to

⁶⁸ Kalev I. Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* [journal online]; available from <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=0&sid=2&srchmode=1&vinst=PROD&fmt=6&startpage=-1&clientid=11969&vname=PQD&RQT=309&did=856713451&scaling=FULL&ts=1186439855&vtype=PQD&rqt=309&TS=1186439860&clientid=11969>; Internet; accessed 6 August 2007.

⁶⁹ Jacqueline-Marie Wilson Wrona, "From Sticks and Stones to Zeros and Ones: The Development of Computer Network Operations as an Element of Warfare: A Study of the Palestinian-Israeli Cyberconflict and What the United States Can Learn from the 'Interfada'" (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2005), 10.

satisfy the increasing needs and demands of the population, governments frequently fail in earning the support of the population. This dynamic is further advanced by large social differences that coexist in developing countries. For example, high levels of corruption among government authorities and increasing levels of social and political violence provide an encouraging environment where "sectors of civil society fight among themselves and against the state."⁷⁰ Within this detrimental dynamic, the government must take appropriate actions to influence the population to assume a positive, participative, and supporting attitude towards its policies. In this context, Information Operations represents useful techniques through which the state can attain these objectives. It is crucial that the state, as an entity, keep in mind the strategic objectives of the Information Operations campaign. This avoids being influenced by short term thinking that might represent tactical victories that, eventually, might have unintended negative outcomes. When planning information operation campaigns, states must focus on long-term objectives. This assures that all subsequent government efforts mutually support each other to achieve the same strategic goals. Additionally, the planning phase of an Information Operations campaign takes into consideration the different means and resources.

To the state, Information Operations represents a comprehensive tool set to support its actions towards its strategic goals. It also supports the development and implementation of government policies. The state can further support the psychological operations' component of Information Operations by using some of the other components of this type of warfare. Carl von Clausewitz writes "war is merely the continuation of policy by other means...The political object is the goal, war is the means of reaching it, and means can never be considered in isolation from their purpose."⁷¹

⁷⁰ William Ramírez Tobón, "Violencia y Democracia en Colombia [Violence and Democracy in Colombia]," *Revista Análisis Político*, Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Bogotá: no. 3 (1988).

⁷¹ Carl von Clausewitz. *On War* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1989), 87.

D. CONCLUSION

This chapter showed the methodology and organization of this research. It also described the insurgency and counterinsurgency model developed by Gordon H. McCormick -- also known as the Mystic Diamond -- to frame the analysis of the use of Information Operations by insurgencies and the response of the state. This chapter also described the operational strategies for both players in the Mystic Diamond while taking into consideration the different courses of action available to each of the contending actors.

In addition, this chapter introduced and used the conceptual models developed by Graham Allison and Phillip Zelikow to gain a better understanding of the reasons why the Mexican Navy has not developed an Information Operations capability. The theory of groupthink developed by Irving Janis was also drawn upon to gain a better understanding of the decision making process at the government level.

Finally, this chapter depicted the relevance of Information Operations as an instrument of policy and focused on the potential to support, optimize, and magnify government actions to indirectly shape an adversary's behavior to influence a desired outcome.

Despite the success of Mexican Navy operations, there is opportunity for improvement. It is important to learn how other countries use Information Operations as policy supporting instruments. The next chapter will use Colombia's experience countering guerrillas as a case study to draw upon information operation practices in Latin America.

III. INFORMATION OPERATIONS IN LATIN AMERICA

Most Latin American countries, as well as other developing countries, face a wide variety of challenges in their social, economic, and political stability. The root causes for this dynamic vary from one country to another. Nevertheless, the matters that most endanger the security of Latin American countries are those related to weak state institutions. Weak institutions inadequately shape and limit the response of the state to address issues such as corruption, drug-trafficking, organized crime, and poverty.⁷²

The communications and economic globalization, which have allowed regional and global economic integration, have been used by illicit organizations to coordinate their efforts against the state. In Latin America, Colombia stands out for its experience in dealing with internal social challenges. They have been reinforced by the state's inability, or lack of attention, to satisfy the most basic demands of some sectors of the population.⁷³

In Latin America, some countries have used their militaries to support the governmental strategy to deal with their internal issues. In Colombia, this is particularly relevant since the state is required to fight internal enemies. Drug trafficking has become the main source of financing for Latin America's oldest and most powerful guerrilla organization, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia- People's Army (FARC-EP). It is significant that in October 1997, the Department of State designated the FARC-EP a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) "because it perpetrated and continues to perpetrate bombings, murder,

⁷² Pedro Villagra Delgado, *Hemispheric Security: A Perception from the South. Perspectives from Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia*. (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, July 2003), 2.

⁷³ Villagra Delgado, 6.

kidnapping, extortion, and hijacking, as well as guerilla [sic] and conventional military action against Colombian political, military, and economic targets.”⁷⁴

The challenge for the Colombian government has been to deal with the internal drug war and to prevent a civil war. The response of the state has been shaped to deprive the insurgency of a key asset -- the population’s support. The Colombian military has played a key role in conducting operations to gain the support of the population.

The purpose of this chapter is to present a case study of Colombia, the development of its Information Operation capabilities, and their use in support of governmental policies to attain desired objectives. The lessons learned from similar experiences in Latin America can be useful for the Mexican military in countering drug trafficking and insurgencies. This chapter also presents a concise case study of Mexico and describes how the country has managed its challenges without an established Information Operations capability.

A. CASE STUDY: COLOMBIA

Colombia is located in the junction between Central and South America, accesses the Caribbean Sea and the Pacific Ocean, and borders five countries. Its location favors economic interaction with neighboring countries and the world. Drug cartels and insurgencies have also taken advantage of the country’s geo-strategic location to exploit the state’s weaknesses for their own purposes.

⁷⁴ U.S. 109th Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, "Counternarcotics Strategies in Latin America," 30 March 2006; available from <https://www.hsdl.org/homesec/docs/testimony/nps30-012307-08.pdf&code=4ab9ad684600c0d9660d31d0e03493ca>; Internet; accessed 18 July 2007, 76.



Figure 2. Physical-political map of Colombia.

From: "Mapa físico-político de Colombia [physical-political map of Colombia]," *Instituto Geográfico Agustín Codazzi [Agustin Codazzi Geographical Institute]*; available http://ssiglims.igac.gov.co/ssigl/mapas_de_colombia/galeria/IGAC/Matis_Colombia.pdf; Internet; accessed 8 August 2007.

The current president, Álvaro Uribe, and his administration, currently fight three concurrent wars against narco-trafficking, paramilitaries, and rebel insurgent groups. The fight of the Colombian government against its internal enemies has been supported by the United States through the joint United States-Colombian strategic *Plan Colombia*.

This chapter will describe how drug trafficking, paramilitary and insurgent organizations represent significant challenges to the Colombian government and its military. Drug trafficking has become a primary financial source for insurgencies. Next, we will outline *Plan Colombia* and describe how it represents the main effort of the Colombian government for countering drug trafficking. Lastly, we will identify three paramilitary and insurgency organizations.

1. Drug Trafficking

Since the 1970s, Colombian drug cartels have produced and smuggled marihuana to the United States. In 1972, President Richard Nixon coined the phrase “war on drugs” to oppose the legalization of marihuana. Eventually, during the 1980s, as the drug traffickers looked for alternative ways to increase their profits, they began producing and smuggling cocaine, heroine, and synthetic drugs. In 1982, as the American government became aware of the health issues related to these drugs and their negative effects on society, President Ronald Reagan increased the war on drugs by primarily focusing on “police repression at home and interdiction of illegal drugs from producing countries.”⁷⁵ Nevertheless, drug traffickers found alternative methods to continue their lucrative criminal activity in the United States and abroad and evaded authorities. The fact that Colombia is the main source of illicit drugs found in the United States has made the American government take action. As a result, “the focus of U.S. policy toward Colombia has been to curb narcotics production and trafficking.”⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Frechette, 1.

⁷⁶ Colleen W. Cook, "Colombia: Issues for Congress. CRS Report for Congress," December 2006 [web site]; available from <https://www.hsdl.org/homesec/docs/crs/nps33-012307-03.pdf&code=d91f68e8286559e64e20bab00f51b9f7>; Internet; accessed 17 July 2007, 1.

As of 2006, Colombia produced around ninety percent of the cocaine and over fifty percent of the heroin marketed in the United States.⁷⁷ The levels of violence associated with drug related activities, combined with the inability of the state to enforce public security and satisfy the demands of the population, resulted in unprecedented levels of social violence. This came to be known as "colombianization" which is "a metaphor for interminable violence and the corrupting influence of illegal drugs."⁷⁸ Colombian drug cartels have almost unlimited access to monetary resources. This allows them to resist the action of the state -- either through violence or co-optation.

⁷⁷ Testimony of Mr. Michael A. Braun, Chief of Operations, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. For more information see: U.S. 109th Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, "Counternarcotics Strategies in Latin America," 30 March 2006; available from <https://www.hsdl.org/homesec/docs/testimony/nps30-012307-08.pdf&code=4ab9ad684600cd9660d31d0e03493ca>; Internet; accessed 18 July 2007, 28.

⁷⁸ Gabriel Marcella, "The United States and Colombia: The Journey from Ambiguity to Strategic Clarity," Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, May 2003 [web site]; available from <https://www.hsdl.org/homesec/docs/dod/nps03-071604-03.pdf&code=6775d93a129d79b20ad200db9799a0e0>; Internet; accessed 23 July 2007, 10.

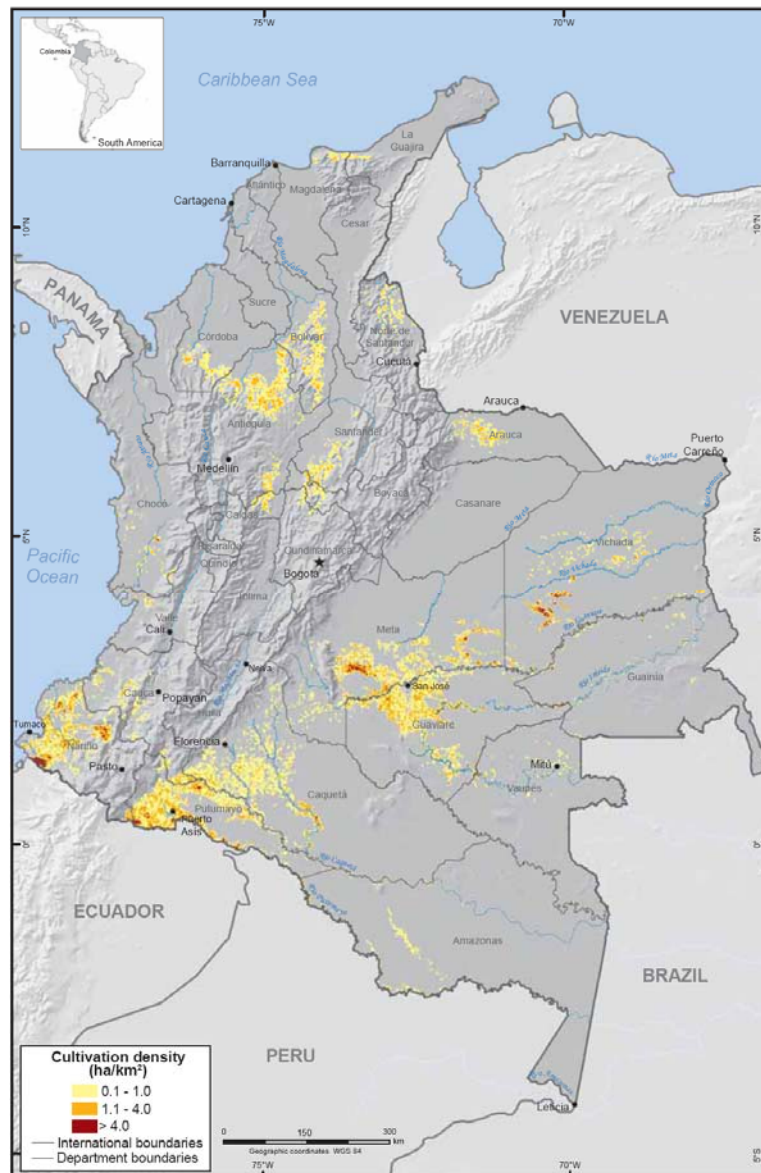


Figure 3. Coca cultivation density in Colombia, 2006.

From: "Colombia Coca Cultivation Survey." *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*; available http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/icmp/colombia_2006_en_web.pdf; Internet; accessed 8 August 2007, 9.

Drug cartels have invested large amounts of money to co-opt the different levels of government and the population. Because they had been co-opted, threatened, or feared the response of the drug related organizations, the level of involvement of drug cartels in the political arena was something that few dared to

admit. However, the level of involvement of such organizations and their illicit activities were discovered when the United States delegitimized the Colombian government's efforts in its fight against drugs. This effort was led by the Clinton administration as a way to put political pressure on the administration of Ernesto Samper. The Clinton administration stated that "Samper had disregarded U.S. warnings of cartel contributions to his campaign; found that Colombia was not cooperating fully on counter-narcotics efforts; and cited limited cooperation by the Colombian government and 'pervasive corruption' under the Samper administration; and deemed the presidency untrustworthy."⁷⁹ Despite widespread corruption in Latin American countries, the Colombian government was exposed because "for the first time impunity is being seriously challenged, with nine serving members and one former member of Congress in prison and others under investigation."⁸⁰

The drug cartels have remained popular among some sectors of the population. In some cases, the support of the population has been voluntary; in others, the support has derived from coercion or monetary influence. Voluntary support has been essential to the population who do not have alternative means of earning a living. This dynamic is reinforced by the limited capability of the state to provide social services, education, and employment to the growing population. Meanwhile, the threats of drug trafficking organizations against the population coerce their support.

Despite its long existence and continuous efforts to gain support from the population, "the FARC does not enjoy widespread mass support in the Colombian population, even in rural areas. It has, however, carefully proselytized or terrorized in selected locales related to its nation-wide, logistics-

⁷⁹ Nina M. Serafino, *Colombia: Current Issues and Historical Background*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003), 91.

⁸⁰ International Crisis Group, "Colombia's New Armed Groups," *Latin America Report* 20, May 2007 [web site]; available from <https://www.hsd.org/homesec/docs/foreign/nps36-053107-09.pdf&code=6775d93a129d79b20ad200db9799a0e0>; Internet; accessed 23 July 2007, 22.

based strategy."⁸¹ Despite the pressure of counterinsurgents, "respected polls indicate consistently that less than two percent of society supports FARC and ELN."⁸² Even though only a small fraction of the Colombian population supports insurgencies, the insurgents' involvement in drug related activities allow them to obtain enough resources to finance their activities. This relative independence and self-sufficient capability to generate economic resources and satisfy personnel requirements has minimized the need for widespread support.⁸³

In the context of *Plan Colombia*, which will be described in the next section, aerial eradication represents a central tactic in the counternarcotics strategy of the United States to support the Colombian government in its fight against drugs. Even though aerial eradication has succeeded in destroying the coca crop, it has not reduced the status of the country as the largest producer and supplier of cocaine in the world. There are also serious concerns among the population and environmental organizations about the side effects of Glyphosate glycine and *Cosmo-Flux* as the herbicides used to spray coca fields.⁸⁴ The use of non-selective, systemic eradication has had the adverse effect of destroying the legal crops of thousands of peasants who found themselves with no way to make a living. According to the Putumayo community and some church leaders, since spraying damages food crops:

⁸¹ Geoffrey Demarest, *Mapping Colombia: The Correlation between Land Data and Strategy*, U.S. Army War College, March 2003 [web site]; available from <https://www.hsdl.org/homesec/docs/dtic/ADA413030.pdf&code=94efdbd97ce1faf71bd6bb4c819739d4>; Internet; accessed 24 July 2007, 7.

⁸² John A. Cope, "Colombia's War: Toward a New Strategy," *Institute for National Defense Studies*, October 2002 [web site]; available from <https://www.hsdl.org/homesec/docs/dtic/ADA421906.pdf&code=6775d93a129d79b20ad200db9799a0e0>; Internet; accessed 23 July 2007, 2.

⁸³ Cope, 3.

⁸⁴ The Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) of the Organization of American States made a study about the effects of using Glyphosate to eradicate coca plantations. Estudio de los efectos del Programa de Erradicación de Cultivos Ilícitos mediante la aspersión aérea con el herbicida Glifosato (PECIG) y de los cultivos ilícitos en la salud humana y en el medio ambiente [Study of the the Illicit Crops Eradication Program by aerial aspersion with glyphosate herbicide and of illicit crops on Human Health and on the Environment]. Organización de Estados Americanos [Organization of American States]. March 2005. [web site]; available from <http://www.cicad.oas.org/es/glisfosatoInformeFinal.pdf>; Internet; accessed 24 July 2007.

Many families in FARC-controlled rural areas, unable to travel to paramilitary-controlled towns, were going hungry. Great numbers of people were leaving Putumayo, some across the border into Ecuador and others to plant coca elsewhere in the country. Young people, lacking other economic opportunities, were volunteering to join the FARC or the paramilitaries.⁸⁵

Although aerial eradication is a successful and viable way to counter coca production, it has an adverse effect by alienating the population -- especially since there are no other means of subsistence to compensate for the loss of their food crops.

2. Plan Colombia

Plan Colombia is a six-year strategic plan developed by former Colombian President Andrés Pastrana (1998-2002). The purpose was "to end the country's 40-year-old armed conflict, eliminate drug trafficking, and promote economic and social development."⁸⁶ The Colombian government seized the initiative to develop this plan against the drug cartels to promote peace and economic stability, while increasing security to restore control of the state. *Plan Colombia* is "an integral policy that looks to reiterate the commitment of the Colombian government to look for a negotiated political solution to the conflict, under fundamental basic principles such as democracy, territorial integrity and the defense and protection of human rights."⁸⁷ The main objectives of the Colombian government have been to "promote peace and economic

⁸⁵ Ingrid Vaicius and Adam Isacson, "The 'War on Drugs' meets the 'War on Terror': The United States' military involvement in Colombia climbs to the next level," Center for International Policy, February 2003. Available from <http://ciponline.org/colombia/0302ipr.pdf>; Internet; accessed 23 July 2007, 7.

⁸⁶ Connie Veillette, "Plan Colombia: A Progress Report. CRS Report for Congress," January 2006 [web site]; available from <https://www.hsdl.org/homesec/docs/crs/nps27-020806-06.pdf&code=6775d93a129d79b20ad200db9799a0e0>; Internet; accessed 23 July 2007, 1.

⁸⁷ Oscar Pina, "Plan Colombia: How U.S. Military Assistance Affects Regional Balances of Power" (Master's Thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2004), 48.

development, and increase security."⁸⁸ Addressing drug trafficking is, therefore, an integral part of achieving the government's objectives.

Meanwhile, for the United States the objective of *Plan Colombia* is "to prevent the flow of illegal drugs into the United States, as well as to help Colombia promote peace and economic development because it contributes to regional security in the Andes."⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the policy of the United States towards the Colombian government to fight drug trafficking has also evolved to support its fight against illegal armed groups. As part of the expansion of the American support to its Colombian counterpart, "in 2002, the [Bush] Administration requested, and Congress approved, expanded authority to use U.S. counternarcotics funds for a unified campaign to fight both drug trafficking and terrorist organizations in Colombia."⁹⁰ General Jackman of U.S. Southern Command said:

Our main objective is to help transform the Colombian military to a force that is capable of defeating the terrorist organizations, establishing presence and defense, in order to provide a safe and secure environment and governance throughout Colombia.⁹¹

Therefore in 2002, support from the United States broadened from counterdrugs to counterinsurgency when the United States Congress removed restrictions that constrained American resources and assets within *Plan Colombia* to support only counter drugs operations. The decision of the American government to allow its Colombian counterpart, through its military and police, to use the American military aid and equipment to conduct operations against the FARC-EP, and other insurgent organizations, proved vital for the success and re-legitimization of the state. The FARC-EP now see *Plan*

⁸⁸ Veillette, 2.

⁸⁹ Veillette, 2.

⁹⁰ Veillette, 3.

⁹¹ Vaicius and Isacson, "The 'War on Drugs' meets the 'War on Terror': The United States' military involvement in Colombia climbs to the next level," 13.

Colombia as a "threat to its funding sources and a direct military threat to the organization itself through the introduction of U.S. Blackhawk helicopters in the region."⁹²

	ACI	FMF	NADR	AirWing	DoD	Total
FY2000	60.1	--	--	38.0	128.5	226.6
P.L.106-246	832.0	--	--	--	100.7	932.7
FY2001	48.0	--	--	38.0	190.2	276.2
FY2002	379.9 ^a	--	25.0	38.2	119.1	562.2
FY2003	580.2 ^b	17.1	3.3	41.5	165.0	807.1
FY2004	473.9	98.5	.2	45.0	122.0	739.6
FY2005	462.8	99.2	4.1	45.0	200.0	811.1
FY2006	464.8	89.1	--	45.0	112.0	710.9
FY2007 (request)	465.0	90.0	3.84	na	na	558.8
Total	3,766.7	393.9	36.44	290.7	1,137.5	5,630.8

Table 1. U.S. Assistance for *Plan Colombia*, FY2000-FY2006.⁹³

From: Colleen W. Cook. *Colombia: Issues for Congress*. CRS Report for Congress, 13 December 2006. Available from <https://www.hsdl.org/homesec/docs/crs/nps33-012307-03.pdf&code=f704d7a899cee5f8bd7ef366fb1c3929>; Internet; accessed 24 September 2007, 29.

⁹² Kim Cragin and Bruce Hoffman, *Arms Trafficking and Colombia*. (Santa Monica: RAND, 2003), xv.

⁹³ Notes: Figures in millions dollars; columns may not total due to rounding. For FY2000 and thereafter, *Plan Colombia* funds are assigned to the State Department's International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Bureau (INL) or the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI). The State Department transfers funds to other agencies carrying out programs in Colombia, of which USAID has received the largest portion. Defense Department funding is from its Counter Narcotics account. DOD requests one sum for programs around the world and adjusts its regional allocations as needed.

a. Includes \$6 million appropriated to FMF but transferred to the ACI account.

b. Includes \$93 million in FMF regular appropriations and \$20 million in FMF supplemental funds that were transferred to the ACI account.

Some analysts that have studied *Plan Colombia*, and the relationships of Colombia with other South American countries, have concluded that it has negatively affected the balance of military power. Pina argues that "...the execution of *Plan Colombia* in its different phases has created a military imbalance between Colombia and Venezuela in areas such as Air Mobility, Air Interception, Close Air Support, Special Operation Units, and Air Defense."⁹⁴ Besides the assets provided by the United States to the Colombian Armed Forces as part of *Plan Colombia*, the most relevant aspect for its fight against the guerrillas has been the use of the American doctrine in its Counterinsurgency Operations. One of the most relevant aspects has been intelligence collection:

U.S. [military] aid has provided the Colombian military with improved signals intelligence (SIGINT). Using this critical factor has guaranteed successful operations against guerrillas in 2003. In sum, considerable experience, equipment, and intelligence sharing counter-insurgent and anti-drug roles have forged the Colombian Army, Air Force, Navy and National Police into a relatively professional and competent service, almost exclusively directed towards counter-guerrilla operations.⁹⁵

The use of the new capabilities developed by the Colombian military, with support from the United States, has allowed it to deal in a more effective and efficient manner with insurgent and terrorist organizations who challenge the authority of the state. Next, the most significant insurgent and paramilitary groups that challenge the authority of the state, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), the National Liberation Army (ELN), and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) will be discussed.

⁹⁴ Pina, 67.

⁹⁵ Pina, 67-68.

3. Insurgent and Paramilitary Groups

The geography of the country, reinforced by the ethnic and social divisions among the population, represents a constant challenge for the integration and consolidation of the Colombian population. The task for the Colombian government has been further complicated by "a pronounced dispersion of power, manifested through extreme levels of localism and regionalism."⁹⁶ These feelings among the population are further encouraged by the epic values that bond them together and alienate them from the ruling centralized aristocracy. Eventually, under the influence of external actors, some armed groups consolidated and challenged the incipient hegemony of the Colombian state. The most significant challenges for the Colombian state are the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (FARC-EP), the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC). The FARC-EP and the ELN, despite their common objective of overthrowing the Colombian government and some attempts to unite their efforts, are currently engaged in a conflict where neither of them trusts the other. Each one fights to expand its area of influence while protecting its own interests. The origins of these ideological differences are related to the original leaders of the groups involved. According to Nazih Richani, "the FARC's leaders are predominantly drawn from the peasantry, whereas the ELN's leaders are predominantly drawn from the urban middle class."⁹⁷ At the same time, some members of the AUC's leadership were involved in narco-trafficking activities and were members of narco-bourgeoisie⁹⁸ society before assuming their role as anti-insurgents. Empirical studies about the

⁹⁶ James F. Rochlin, *Vanguard Revolutionaries in Latin America* (Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 2003), 87.

⁹⁷ Nazih Richani, "Caudillos and the Crisis of the Colombian State: Fragmented Sovereignty, the War System and the Privatisation [sic] of Counterinsurgency in Colombia." *Third World Quarterly* 28 (2007): 414.

⁹⁸ Narco-bourgeoisie refers to the members of the high society that have earned their money from drug related activities.

origins of the constituencies of insurgents and paramilitaries have shown evidence of low levels of education of FARC and ELN members, compared to the education level of AUC members.⁹⁹

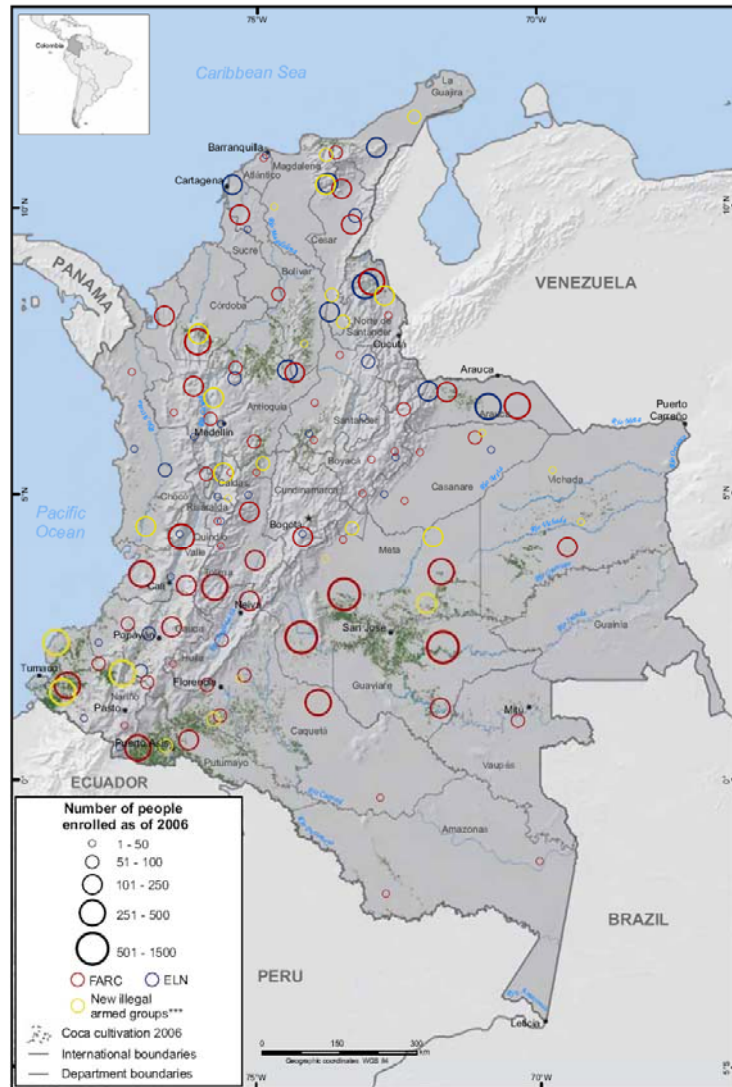


Figure 4. Illegal armed groups and coca cultivation in Colombia, 2006.

From: "Colombia Coca Cultivation Survey." *United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*; available

http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/icmp/colombia_2006_en_web.pdf; Internet; accessed 8 August 2007, 68.

⁹⁹ For more information about these studies, see: Richani, "Caudillos and the Crisis of the Colombian State: Fragmented Sovereignty, the War System and the Privatisation [sic] of Counterinsurgency in Colombia," 414-415.

a. *Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejercito del Pueblo (FARC-EP)*

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People's Army (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia-Ejercito del Pueblo -FARC-EP) were founded in 1966 by the Colombian Communist Party under the influence of Fidelista groups and on the basis of the independent peasant republic of Marquetalia.¹⁰⁰ Initially, the FARC-EP was organized among the peasant population of the remote and isolated mountainous areas between Bogotá and Cali.

This guerrilla organization has emerged to become Latin America's oldest and most powerful guerrilla organization -- also recognized as "one of the largest and most well-funded militant organizations in the world."¹⁰¹ Since its beginning, the communist ideology has played a significant part in recruiting sympathizers and followers for the FARC. The limited capability of the Colombian state to satisfy the demands of its population has helped the FARC-EP to evolve from a guerrilla movement to a criminal institution. For some people, it is the only viable option -- mainly peasants -- to escape poverty and to have a better way of life. James Zackrison, Research Director for the Center for Hemispheric Defense Studies, identified institutionalization as the most significant characteristic of FARC, when he said:

The FARC is unique [among] Latin American insurgencies in that it is institutionalized, that is, it is not dependent on one single leader. It might be possible to negotiate with individual fronts, thus dividing the organization as a whole, but I've not seen any success in this regard to date.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Thomas C. Wright. *Latin America in the Era of the Cuban Revolution* (Westport: Praeger, 2001), 79.

¹⁰¹ Cragin and Hoffman, *Arms Trafficking and Colombia*, xxi.

¹⁰² Larry Birns and Alex Sánchez, "The Colombian Civil War: Uribe Now in Washington in a Move That May Make or Break his Presidency," *Council on Hemispheric Affairs*, 7 June 2007 [web site]; available from <http://www.coha.org/2007/06/07/the-colombian-civil-war-uribe-now-in-washington-in-a-move-that-may-make-or-break-his-presidency>; Internet; accessed 20 September 2007.

In the years prior to 1982, the FARC obtained financial resources from illicit activities, such as extortion, bank robberies, and kidnappings.¹⁰³ Despite the limited amount of resources that the organization was able to obtain from these activities, the supreme commander of the guerrillas, Manuel Marulanda Vélez, claimed the FARC-EP never received support from the Soviet Union or Cuba. As the group searched for economic resources, it gravitated towards drug related activities. The wide variety of illicit activities in which the group was involved was used to:

Create and sustain a liberation army, recruited from marginalized parts of society and equipped to be capable of defeating security forces, controlling territory in order to isolate cities, undermining legitimacy of government at all levels, weakening societal will to resist, and ultimately winning the revolutionary struggle.¹⁰⁴

Initially, the rebel organizations offered protection to the drug plantations and shipments. However, as the guerrilla movement became aware of the large profits and realized that they were already involved in illicit activities, they increased their demand for profits and, eventually, started growing their own drugs. The relationship of the FARC-EP with drug trafficking organizations was such that as the "burgeoning enterprise grew explosively in the 1980's, the FARC expanded its territorial and military influence."¹⁰⁵ Despite the profit obtained by both illicit organizations, their lack of common interests and objectives led to their breakup. The most relevant ideological disjuncture was synthesized because narco-trafficking kingpins considered themselves to be part of the legitimate capitalist bourgeoisie of Colombia -- while the FARC's ideology was mainly socialist.¹⁰⁶ Finally, on May 29, 2003, the president of the United States, George

¹⁰³ Alfredo Rangel Suárez, "Parasites and Predators: Guerrillas and the Insurrection Economy of Colombia," *Journal of International Affairs* 53 (2000): 582.

¹⁰⁴ Cope, 2.

¹⁰⁵ Rochlin, 99.

¹⁰⁶ Rochlin. 100.

W. Bush, under the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act, designated the FARC-EP as a Significant Foreign Narcotics Trafficker.¹⁰⁷

During the 1990s, the FARC-EP became significantly stronger and capable of effectively challenging the Colombian state. According to some Colombian analysts' estimates, the FARC-EP receives over \$300 million annually from narcotics trafficking.¹⁰⁸ During this decade, the FARC implemented its comprehensive strategic plan denouncing the Bolivarian Campaign for a New Colombia. This allowed it to attain the peak of its influence and power within the country. Within this strategic plan, the FARC-EP increased its level of activity against the state in an effort to destabilize it and diminish its legitimacy. Thus, began a state of general insurrection among the population. Also as part of this strategic plan, the FARC-EP officially separated from the Communist Party and organized a new political party named the Colombian Clandestine Communist Party (PCCC). The FARC-EP grew so much with drug related money, that it posed a great challenge to the Colombian state. As Saskiewicz describes it, "by 1996, the FARC-EP's victories against the Colombian military would become so definitive that many domestic and foreign observers would predict the imminent fall of the central government."¹⁰⁹ The guerrilla movement gained further presence throughout the country by exploiting the limited capability of the state to satisfy the needs of the population.

¹⁰⁷ U.S. 109th Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on International Relations, "Counternarcotics Strategies in Latin America," 30 March 2006; available from <https://www.hsdl.org/homesec/docs/testimony/nps30-012307-08.pdf&code=4ab9ad684600c0d9660d31d0e03493ca>; Internet; accessed 18 July 2007, 78.

¹⁰⁸ Cope, 3.

¹⁰⁹ Saskiewicz, "The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – People's Army (FARC-EP): Marxist-Leninist Insurgency or Criminal Enterprise?," 41.

As part of the FARC-EP's strategy to further its offensive against the Colombian state, it chose to engage in peace talks with President Andrés Pastrana. As a precondition to participate in such talks, the FARC-EP demanded that the government cede five FARC-controlled municipalities in south-central Colombia, -- 42,139 square kilometers -- to create a demilitarized zone known as *Zona de Despeje*.

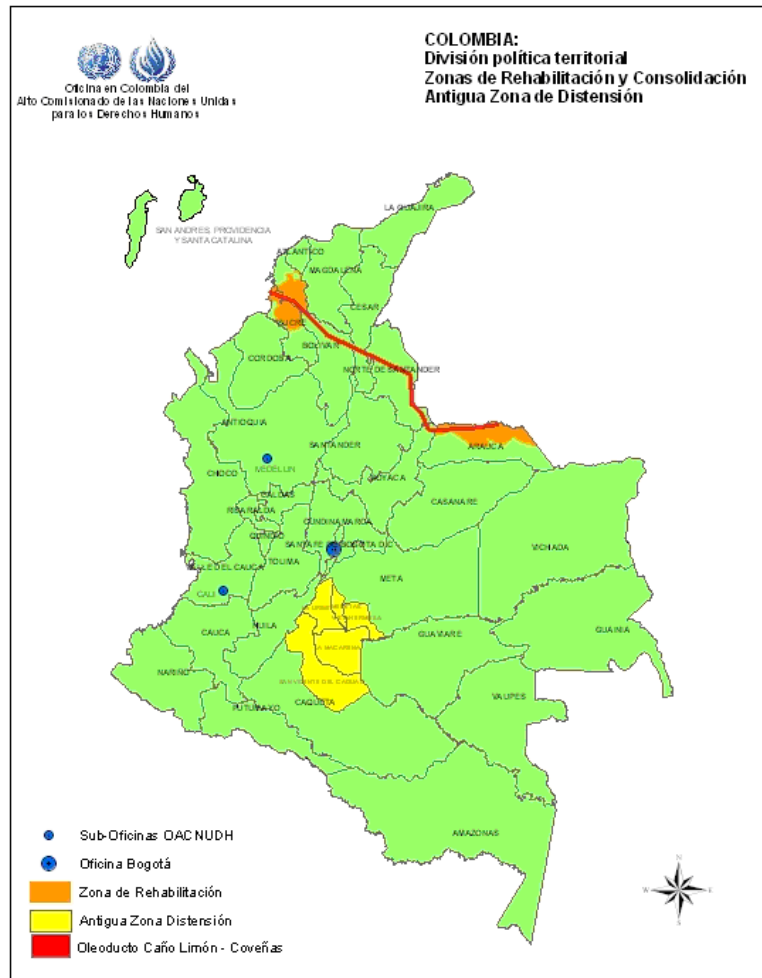


Figure 5. Former Distention Zone and current Rehabilitation Zones.

From: Informe Anual del Alto Comisionado sobre DDHH en Colombia en 2001. [2001 Annual Report from the High Commissioner of Human Rights in Colombia]. Office of the High Commissioner on the situation of human rights in Colombia, February 2003. Available from <http://www.hchr.org.co/documentoseinformes/informes/altocomisionado/informe2002.html>; Internet; accessed 30 July 2007.

In theory, this agreement between the government and the guerrilla was meant to provide an incentive to develop a political and a territorial space for negotiations between both parties. In practice, the FARC-EP used the demilitarized zone as a safe haven for its illicit activities -- specifically drug production, weapon smuggling, hostage holding, training, and directing attacks against the Colombian military outside this area.¹¹⁰ Although a demilitarized zone was established, the FARC-EP maintained the deployment of its guerrilla forces throughout the rest of the country. The interest of the Colombian government to attain peace is evidenced by two trips that President Pastrana made to the demilitarized zone to sustain talks with guerrilla leaders.¹¹¹ President Pastrana was severely criticized for the concessions that he made to the guerrillas. The level of disagreement and criticism of Pastrana is evident by the fact that "in May 1999, Colombian Defense Minister Rodrigo Lloreda resigned and sixteen army generals offered their resignations, criticizing Pastrana for excessive concessions to the guerrillas and the continued extension of the demilitarized zone."¹¹²

The tipping point that marked the failure of the peace process came on February 20, 2002 with "the hijacking of a civilian aircraft and the kidnapping of one passenger, Senator Jorge Eduardo Gechem Turbay, head of the Senate Commission on Peace and member of a large and politically prominent family..¹¹³ This event prompted President Pastrana to announce the end of the process and to order Colombian armed forces to retake the demilitarized zone that had been given over to the FARC-EP as a goodwill gesture to start the peace process.¹¹⁴ Pastrana's decision was intended to reestablish control in the

¹¹⁰ Cragin and Hoffman, *Arms Trafficking and Colombia*, 13.

¹¹¹ Nina M. Serafino. "Colombia: Conditions and U.S. Policy Options. CRS Report for Congress," February 2001 [web site]; available from <https://www.hsdl.org/homesec/docs/crs/nps10-120803-05.pdf&code=afed3073f52ab7c3415c20be66189367>; Internet; accessed 26 July 2007, 1.

¹¹² Serafino. "Colombia: Conditions and U.S. Policy Options. CRS Report for Congress," 20.

¹¹³ Marcella, 35-36.

¹¹⁴ Marcella, 36.

demilitarized zone, reaffirm the authority of the state, and deny safe haven to the guerrilla organization. Although difficult to assess, it is certain that this measure impacted the ability of the organization to continue their illicit operations. Despite the large amounts of money earned from drug related activities, it appears that the insurgent movement remains ideologically committed. According to its declarations and documents, the strategic objectives of the FARC-EP include "the defeat of the Colombian military, the toppling of the central government, and the establishment of a regime founded on Marxist-Leninist and 'Bolivarian' principles."¹¹⁵

The conviction of its constituency and the support from the population represent two fundamental aspects for the survival of any insurgency. The FARC-EP adopted three strategies to deal with these issues. The first strategy, designed to maintain the support and cohesion of its constituency, was adopted to terminate resentment and prevent schism among the members of the group. The FARC-EP formalized this strategy by declaring a penal code known as the *Reglamento de Régimen Disciplinario*.¹¹⁶ This document is "used to discipline rank and file guerrillas and to instill a strict sense of military discipline firmly rooted in fear."¹¹⁷ The second strategy, constantly applied and adapted since the formation of the group, is designed to win the support of the population. This strategy redresses the social injustices, such as the unfair distribution of land and the lack of state presence in rural areas, to attract the interest of the rural and marginalized population. The FARC-EP has also succeeded in attracting women to join its cause -- especially among sectors of the society where women live in precarious conditions or are subjugated by the social order -

¹¹⁵ Saskiewicz, 103.

¹¹⁶ The FARC's Rules for Disciplinary Regulations are described by Juan Guillermo Ferro Medina and Graciela Uribe Ramón in "El Orden de la Guerra - Las FARC-EP: Entre la Organización y la Política. For more information see: Juan Guillermo Ferro Medina and Graciela Uribe Ramón, *El Orden de la Guerra: Las FARC-EP: Entre la Organización y la Política* [The Order of War: The FARC-EP: Between the Organization and politics] (Bogotá: Pontificia Universidad Javeriana, 2002), 57-59.

¹¹⁷ Saskiewicz, 37.

- by offering a way to fight against social injustice. The third strategy is a variant of the second strategy as it is also designed to win the support of the population. Nevertheless, while the second strategy addresses some the interests of the population, the third strategy deals with fear and coercion.

The FARC-EP has distinguished itself by using coercive violence against small isolated communities and by exploiting the limited capability of the Colombian government to apply the rule of law. The insurgent group has also taken advantage of the diminished presence of government authorities to threaten and coerce municipal authorities and to weaken the presence of the Colombian state in rural areas. In some cases, mayors from districts located in areas with departments with a strong guerrilla presence, have opted to resign or simply abandon their jobs.¹¹⁸

The FARC-EP is also responsible for kidnappings and murders to deter the population from denouncing the presence of the guerrillas. In some cases the FARC-EP has resorted to forcible recruitment and herding villagers together at gunpoint. In most cases, the group uses subtle pressures backed by thinly veiled threats to induce and persuade people to join the movement.¹¹⁹ The FARC-EP has also gained unpopular attention for recruiting and using minors under the age of eighteen as combatants against the Colombian government. According to estimates from Human Rights Watch, over 7,400 minors currently serve in the ranks of the FARC-EP.¹²⁰ The use of underage combatants by

¹¹⁸ Arturo Peñaloza Pinzón, "Por amenazas de las FARC, el miedo paralizó a siete municipios del Catatumbo, en Norte de Santander [As a result of FARC's treads, fear paralyzed seven districts from Catatumbo, in the North of Santander]," *El Tiempo* [journal online]; available from <http://www.fac.mil.co/?idcategoria=15680>; Internet; accessed 20 September 2007.

¹¹⁹ Human Rights Watch, "You'll learn not to cry: Child Combatants in Colombia," September 2003 [web site]; available from <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/colombia0903/colombia0903.pdf>; Internet; accessed 20 September 2007, 42.

¹²⁰ Human Rights Watch, 24.

FARC-EP constitutes a violation of the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child which forbids children under the age of fifteen from taking part in warfare.¹²¹

In summary, the FARC-EP has exploited many of the weaknesses of the Colombian state. This allows the group to exert some degree of control over significant parts of the Colombian territory.

b. Ejército de Liberación Nacional (ELN)

In 1964, the National Liberation Army (Ejército de Liberación Nacional -ELN) was founded as a pro-Cuban revolutionary guerrilla group. It was inspired by Che Guevara and led by Fabio Vasquez Castaño. The ELN is the smaller of the two main Marxist guerrilla organizations active in Colombia. However, the ELN is a Marxist-Leninist group with origins in the country's university campuses. The urban-educated origins of the ELN, unlike those of the FARC, somehow limit the appeal and social base of the group among rural, uneducated sectors of the population.

Since its beginning, the ELN has had a strong religious influence brought about by several priests that were inspired by a Liberation Theology.¹²²

¹²¹ The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child raised the age limit to eighteen, forbidding the compulsory military recruitment of children under the age of eighteen and establishing that "armed groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State should not, under any circumstances, recruit or use in hostilities persons under the age of eighteen years." For additional information see: Human Rights Watch, "You'll learn not to cry: Child Combatants in Colombia," 3-4.

¹²² According to the Vatican: "The theological and pastoral movement known as 'Liberation Theology' was born, first in the countries of Latin America which are marked by the religious and cultural heritage of Christianity, and then in other countries of the third world, as well as in certain circles in the industrialized countries....'Theology of Liberation' refers first of all to a special concern for the poor and the victims of oppression, which in turn begets a commitment to justice." Joseph Ratzinger, "Instruction On Certain Aspects Of The 'Theology Of Liberation'," Congregation For The Doctrine Of The Faith, August 1984 [web site]; available from http://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_19840806_theology-liberation_en.html; Internet; accessed 1 August 2007.

The priests decided to support and adopt the rebel cause of the group.¹²³ During the 1970s, the ELN was repeatedly defeated by the Colombian military. Nevertheless, the group reemerged under the joint-leadership of Father Manuel Pérez alias *El Cura Pérez* and Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista, alias *Gabino*. This legacy of priestly influence played a significant role in initially limiting the involvement of the ELN in drug related activities based on moral grounds. Nevertheless, as time passed and the religious influence diminished, the group has become increasingly involved with drugs. According to some estimates of Colombian analysts, the ELN receives over \$200 million annually from narcotics trafficking.¹²⁴

Other analysts argue that the ELN relies more on "kidnapping and extortion for its funding."¹²⁵ Kidnapping is such a relevant source of income for the group that the ELN is responsible for most kidnappings that happen in the country. One of the most persistent demands of the ELN has been the nationalization of the Colombian petroleum sector to distribute the wealth among the population.¹²⁶ The ELN's preferred tactics are to attack the country's electrical grid, oil wells, and pipelines within an area. Attacking the country's oil infrastructure has had significant economic, environmental, and social repercussions.

¹²³ Among the priests that joined the group were Camilo Torres, Aurentino Rueda, Domingo Laín, José Antonio Jiménez, Diego Cristóbal Uribe, Bernardo López Arroyave, Manuel Pérez, and Nicolás Rodríguez Bautista. For more information see: No Author, "ELN, al amparo de la Revolución Cubana [ELN under the shadow of the Cuban Revolution], *Elcolombiano.com* (Medellín), 2002 [Journal online]; available from <http://www.elcolombiano.com/micolombiano/violencia/eln.htm>; Internet; accessed 1 August 2007.

¹²⁴ Cope, 3.

¹²⁵ Shawn Choy, "In the Spotlight: The National Liberation Army (ELN-Colombia)," *Center for Defense Information*, 21 June 2002 [web site]; available from http://www.cdi.org/program/document.cfm?documentid=1175&programID=39&from_page=../friendlyversion/printversion.cfm; Internet; accessed 20 September 2007.

¹²⁶ Virginia Marie Bouvier, "Civil Society under Siege in Colombia," United States Institute of Peace, February 2004. Web site. Available from <https://www.hsdl.org/homesec/docs/dhs/nps03-090704-05.pdf&code=6775d93a129d79b20ad200db9799a0e0>; Internet; accessed 23 July 2007, 5.

The ELN has also benefited from the Colombian government's struggle with the FARC. The ELN tried to follow the precedent set forth by the FARC-EP by negotiating a demilitarized zone with the Pastrana administration. Civil resistance played a significant role and, ultimately, prevented the government from ceding the Middle Magdalena region to the ELN.¹²⁷ Despite the failed peace process between the FARC and the Colombian government, the ELN retained certain legitimacy among marginalized sectors of the population.

After losing its religious influence and becoming much more like insurgent guerrillas, the group adopted similar strategies to those developed by the FARC-EP to win and retain the sympathy of the population and deter it from supporting the government. The ELN, in a similar way to the FARC-EP, also uses so-called "war councils" to decide whether to execute an accused or to impose a reduced sentence. There is no evidence that such trials are fair as required by international humanitarian law. Organizations that have researched these procedures claim that these trials are in fact, "summary executions dressed up as judicial proceedings and are abhorrent violations of international humanitarian law."¹²⁸ The ELN also uses Information Operation strategies to maintain the support of the population by blaming "foreign oil companies for weak domestic economies, endemic poverty, and severe income inequality."¹²⁹ The ELN demands the nationalization of the oil industry and the redistribution of the wealth generated by this activity among the marginalized sectors of the Colombian population. The ELN also tries to gain the support of women by offering to address their grievances caused by social injustices and inequality. However, there is evidence of exploitation and abuse of women, particularly minors, within the ranks of this guerrilla organization -- despite the supposed

¹²⁷ International Crisis Group, "Colombia's New Armed Groups," 3.

¹²⁸ Human Rights Watch, 68.

¹²⁹ Choy, "In the Spotlight: The National Liberation Army (ELN-Colombia)."

interest to improve their social situation.¹³⁰ The ELN routinely uses repression and intimidation against the population. Overall, even though the ELN is smaller than the FARC-EP, it uses similar tactics to maximize its impact on the population and finance its fight against the Colombian state.

c. Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC)

The United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia -AUC) appeared in 1997 in response to the inability of the Colombian state to protect the population from guerrilla groups -- mainly the FARC-EP and the ELN. The AUC tends to operate primarily in areas where the state has insufficient military strength to prevent and counter insurgent activities. According to John Cope, the *autodefensas* do not seek to overthrow the government. Instead, they come forward in areas where the state is unable to protect the population, its property, and interests. As a result, many people see them as their only source of protection from insurgent aggression. Despite their propensity for violence, some Colombians see them as the only alternative to defeat the guerrillas.¹³¹

The emerging narco-bourgeoisie played a significant role in the formation of this paramilitary group. In the initial stages, the narco-bourgeoisie, the Colombian army, and the paramilitaries "were junior partners in the paramilitary project, but were acquiring significant strength in the second part of the 1980s and early 1990s, reaching their zenith by the end of the decade."¹³² This dynamic was not new since it is common practice for Colombian landowners to have private armies, or security forces, to protect their family and property. The AUC is different from its predecessors: it became a paramilitary federation of local and regional paramilitary groups whose main purpose was to counter the

¹³⁰ For more information see: No Author, "Infamia: Violaciones a los Derechos del Niño [Infamy: Violations to the Rights of Children]," *Revista Semana*, 6 July 2006 [journal online]; available from <http://www.fac.mil.co/?idcategoria=12784>; Internet; accessed 20 September 2007.

¹³¹ Cope, 3.

¹³² Richani, 407-408.

expanding guerrilla groups. This paramilitary group emerged at a time when the authority of the Colombian state was in jeopardy and its inability to counter the growing guerrilla threat was in question. Despite the fact that the Colombian government declared the paramilitaries illegal in 1989, some sectors of the government and the military continued to view them as a useful tool to counter the guerrillas. There have been accusations that the government uses paramilitaries to fight insurgencies outside the legal framework and without respect for humanitarian law.

Despite the alleged relationship between the Colombian government and the paramilitaries, there is no evidence that the government directly finances the paramilitaries. In 2006, investigations of the Colombian government unveiled evidence of a relationship between politicians and paramilitaries. In early 2007, "the Supreme Court ordered the arrest of Senators Álvaro García and Jairo Merlano and Congressman Eric Morris for links to paramilitary groups."¹³³ These cases became evidence of the infiltration of the paramilitaries into the country's political environment. At the lower levels, the AUC has intimidated and controlled local politicians in certain regions to gain access to public funds. Even with the involvement of the paramilitaries in politics, the most significant source of income for the AUC continues to be drug related money.

The Department of State estimates that "as much as seventy percent of the paramilitary operational costs are financed with drug-related earnings."¹³⁴ In the past, the degree of involvement in drug related activities became a source of disagreement among paramilitary groups. In an effort to settle the differences among its constituency, the leader of the AUC decided to reject the involvement of the group in drug trade and prohibited the use of paramilitary protection for cocaine shipments. Nevertheless, the AUC decided to

¹³³ International Crisis Group, "Colombia's New Armed Groups," 5.

continue taxing "cocaine producers in zones controlled by the paramilitary forces in order to fund its organization."¹³⁵ Despite the fact that drug related activities are a source of finance for the AUC, the group also receives significant amounts of money for providing protection. Private landowners hire the AUC to protect them from kidnappings by guerrillas. The group also obtains funds from extorting private-sector companies, ranchers, and other individuals. The most recent and publicized example was the case of Chiquita Brands International, who "pled guilty to charges that its Colombian representatives or those of its Colombian associates or partners had made payments to paramilitaries that totaled as much as \$1.7 million over several years."¹³⁶

Therefore, "the AUC has a financial incentive for the current fighting in Colombia to continue."¹³⁷ The AUC has repeatedly tried to use the efforts of the Colombian government to demobilize the paramilitaries to negotiate political recognition. Even though in the past, the AUC reached an agreement with the Colombian government to demobilize its troops, the group continues to murder, kidnap, and terrorize the population.¹³⁸ Mark P. Sullivan highlights the fact that:

¹³⁴ U.S. State Department, Office of the Coordinator for Counterterrorism, "Country Reports on Terrorism 2006," 30 April 2007 [web site]; available from <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82738.htm>; Internet; accessed 24 September 2007.

¹³⁵ Center for Defense Information "United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC)," *Center for Defense Information*, [web site]; available from http://www.cdi.org/document/search/displaydoc.cfm?DocumentID=258&StartRow=11&ListRows=10&appendURL=&Orderby=Enabled&Program=&Date_From=&Date_To=08/01/2007&Keywords=auc&ContentType=&Author=; Internet; accessed 2 August 2007.

¹³⁶ Steve Salisbury, "Colombia: Trade, Drugs, and the U.S. Congress," Foreign Policy Research Institute, May 2007 [web site]; available from <http://www.fpri.org/enotes/200705.salisbury.columbiacongress.html>; Internet; accessed 23 September 2007.

¹³⁷ Cragin and Hoffman, *Arms Trafficking and Colombia*, 7.

¹³⁸ On July 15, 2003, the FARC leadership reached an agreement with the Colombian government to demobilize its troops by the end of 2005.

Although the overall level of AUC violence decreased, according to the State Department report, cease-fire violations have included mass killings, kidnappings, assassinations, illegal evictions, robberies, and impressment [sic] of children.¹³⁹

The strategy of the AUC and other paramilitary groups to obtain support from the population resides essentially on their claim of protecting the people from the guerrillas. This assertion gains credibility and is further strengthened by the perception of the population that the government lacks the capacity to apply the rule of law and exercise the monopoly of the use of force. The AUC creates fear among the population and, in sympathizing sectors, gains credibility by searching out and killing peasants whom they accuse of collaborating with FARC.¹⁴⁰

In general, the AUC has exploited and profited from the fact that the resources of the Colombian government are stretched thin. The AUC continues to make threats, induce violence, and use extortion to maintain its label as a paramilitary force.

4. Colombian Government Response

President Álvaro Uribe Vélez¹⁴¹, as part of its National Development Plan *Hacia un Estado Comunitario* 2002-2006 [Towards a Common State], developed a national security doctrine known as *Política de Defensa y Seguridad Democrática* [Democratic Security and Defense Policy -DSDP], as "an instrument to guarantee public liberties, defeat violence and reestablish the confidence of citizens in the action of the state."¹⁴² The DSDP defined the Colombian

¹³⁹ Mark P. Sullivan. "Latin America: Terrorism Issues. CRS Report for Congress," 22 January 2007 [web site]; available from <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/81364.pdf>; Internet; accessed 23 September 2007, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Cragin and Hoffman, *Arms Trafficking and Colombia*, 7.

¹⁴¹ The first term of Álvaro Uribe Vélez as President ran from 2002 to 2006; he is currently serving his second term from 2006 to 2010.

¹⁴² Presidencia República de Colombia, "Informe al Congreso 2007," July 2007 [web site]; available http://web.presidencia.gov.co/sne/2007/julio/20/Informe_congreso_2007.pdf; Internet; accessed 25 September 2007, 33.

government strategy to fight and defeat terrorism, highlighting that the principle objective of democratic security is to strengthen the rule of law while protecting each citizen.¹⁴³

This policy identifies six main threats to Colombian society: terrorism; illicit drugs trade; illicit finances; weapons, ammunitions, and explosives trafficking; kidnap and extortion; and homicide.¹⁴⁴ Since all these issues relate to public security, the Colombian government strengthened its military and the National Police. In an effort to provide a more comprehensive approach to the problem, the Colombian government supported this strategy by taking actions to address social issues and improve governance.

a. Plan of Action

The Colombian government's response was structured around a long-term war plan known as *Plan Patriota 2004*.¹⁴⁵ The plan focused on five main strategies: transforming the Colombian Armed Forces; countering drug production and trafficking; fighting insurgency and paramilitaries; taking care of social problems; and improving governance and control of territory -- particularly with guerrilla presence.

¹⁴³ German Giraldo Restrepo, "Transforming the Colombian Army During the War on Terrorism." Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, March 2006 [web site]; available from <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/ksil349.pdf>; Internet; accessed 25 September 2007, 2.

¹⁴⁴ Presidencia República de Colombia, "Texto del Proyecto de Ley Estatutaria sobre Reforma Antiterrorista [Text of the Project of Statutory Law about Antiterrorist Reform]." 2 March 2004 [web site]; available <http://www.presidencia.gov.co/sne/2004/marzo/02/10022004.htm>; Internet; accessed 25 September 2007.

¹⁴⁵ For information about *Plan Patriota 2004*, see: Cook, "Colombia: Issues for Congress. CRS Report for Congress," 11-12.

(1) Transforming the Colombian Armed Forces. The transformation of the Colombian Armed forces began during the administration of President Andrés Pastrana¹⁴⁶ and has continued under the administration of President Álvaro Uribe. As part of this transformation, the Colombian military forces, together with the National Police have continued to grow, receive better training, education, equipment, and placed an emphasis on professionalism.

The Colombian government passed new laws to support the increase of the security forces. To finance the increase of the troop strength and capabilities of the Colombian military, the government established a one-time "war tax."¹⁴⁷ The United States' government and military also play a role in modernizing and reforming the Colombian Armed Forces. In addition to providing economic support to the Colombian government,¹⁴⁸ the United States assisted the Colombian military in creating, training, and equipping three counter-narcotics battalions and one brigade charged with providing security to the Caño Limón – Coveñas oil pipeline.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ Andrés Pastrana Arango was in office from 1998 to 2002.

¹⁴⁷ Veillette, 3.

¹⁴⁸ See table 1 Table 1, U.S. Assistance for *Plan Colombia*, FY2000-FY2006.

¹⁴⁹ Saskiewicz, 88.

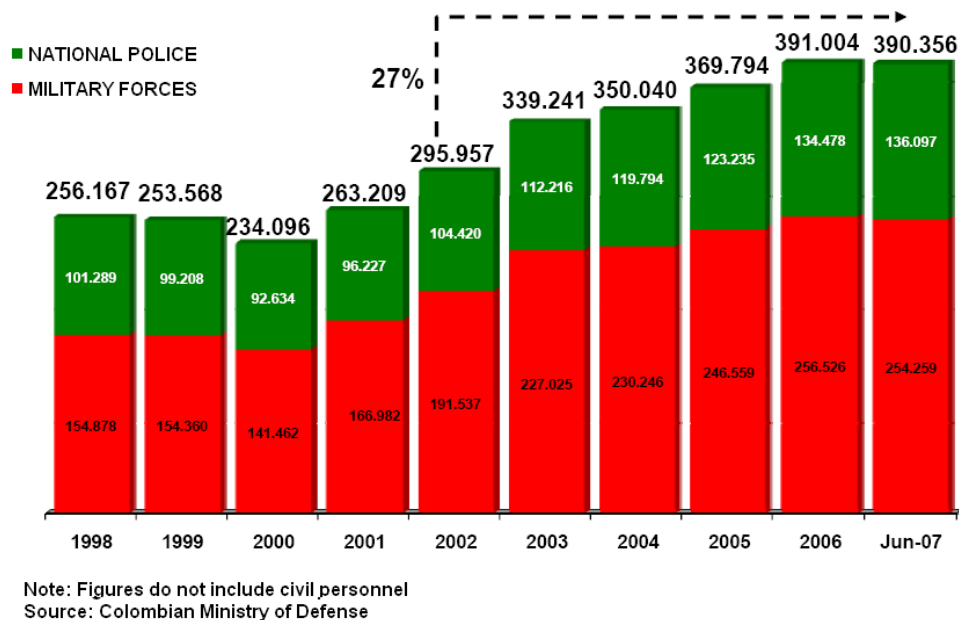


Figure 6. Colombian Military Forces and National Police, 1998-2007.

From: Presidencia República de Colombia. "Logros de la Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática - PCSD [Achievements of the Consolidation Policy of Democratic Security]." Ministerio de Defensa, Julio 2007. Available from http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Sobre_el_Ministerio/Planeacion/ResultadosOperacionales/Logros%20y%20Retos%20de%20la%20Politica%20de%20Consolidacion%20de%20Defensa%20y%20Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf Internet; accessed 1 October 2007, 77.

(2) Countering Drug Production and Trafficking. These activities have been issues for the Colombian government since coca growers from Peru brought the techniques and knowledge of how to enhance the production of coca. Despite the vast support of the United States, eliminating drug trafficking is a very complex issue. Countering drug related activities is an enormous challenge because of the considerable amounts of money involved.

(3) Fighting Insurgency and Paramilitaries. These actions are the fundamental responsibility of the Colombian military and the national police. This responsibility is one of the most challenging due to the groups' experience and skills they have developed fighting the government and

themselves. The United States assumed a more crucial role supporting this fight through the Colombia Antiterrorism Act of 2002. In this document, the U.S. Congress expresses its "support for a unified campaign against illicit narcotics trafficking, terrorist activities, and other threats to the national security of Colombia,"¹⁵⁰ as well as by removing existing restrictions of *Plan Colombia*. Meanwhile, the military took additional actions to gain the support of the population. One of these actions was the creation of anti-kidnapping units that work closely with the National Police. Countering kidnapping has increased the support and trust for the government and its institutions by the population because they now feel protected from guerrilla and paramilitary actions.¹⁵¹

The Colombian military has gained vast experience from more than four decades fighting insurgencies and two decades of struggles against drug-related activities. Despite the experience of the Colombian military, the strategy of wearing down the insurgents is "indeed expensive in terms of time, resources, political endurance, and individual and institutional sacrifices."¹⁵² As a result, the Colombian military has developed strategies to maximize population support, while increasing security and governance. The Colombian military also decided to strengthen its intelligence capabilities. Intelligence based operations, known as "integral action" by the Colombian military, avoids the unnecessary alienation of the population. As part of this strategy, the Army created the General Coordination Action Division. This division's objectives were handling the flow of information -- internal and external -- as well as psychological operations. Military and civilian experts on psychological operations and communications worked together to integrate and improve the

¹⁵⁰ U.S. 107th Congress, House of Representatives, "Colombia Antiterrorism Act of 2002," 25 April 2002 [web site], available from <http://www.govtrack.us/data/us/bills.text/107/h/h4591.pdf>; Internet; accessed 25 September 2007, 2.

¹⁵¹ For more information about the transformation of the Colombian Military, see: Giraldo Restrepo, "Transforming the Colombian Army during the War on Terrorism," 10-11.

¹⁵² Gabriel Marcella and Donald Schulz, "Colombia's Three Wars: U.S. Strategy at the Crossroads," Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, March 1999 [web site]; available from <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB34.pdf>; Internet; accessed 24 September 2007, 30.

internal and external communications processes. The military understood the potential benefits from developing an appropriate relationship with national and international media. This military liaison became the primary means of information for the population about what the Army was doing and how it was doing it. Eventually, these efforts succeeded in gaining national and international support for the work done by the Colombian military.¹⁵³ As Don Snider and Lloyd Matthews describe it, the Army recognized that:

National security in democracies is conducted within the context of civil-military relationships, these civil-military relationships necessarily have a specific structure that channels participants' competencies and responsibilities in order to maximize security at the least cost to democratic principles.¹⁵⁴

The Colombian Ministry of Defense also implemented the program *Red de Cooperantes* to foster the cooperation between the states' security services and the population. This improved the relationship and the flow of information to the public security forces.¹⁵⁵

(4) Taking Care of Social Problems. The Colombian government has put into practice several social programs to take care of social issues and demands of the population. These programs are framed within the strategies of the National Development Plan *Hacia un Estado Comunitario 2002-2006* and its successor, *Estado Comunitario: Desarrollo para Todos 2006-2010*

¹⁵³ For more information about "Integral Action," see: Giraldo Restrepo, "Transforming the Colombian Army During the War on Terrorism," 10-11.

¹⁵⁴ Don M. Snider and Lloyd J. Matthews, *The Future of the Army Profession*, (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2nd edition, 2005), 657, quoted in Giraldo Restrepo, "Transforming the Colombian Army During the War on Terrorism," 14.

¹⁵⁵ Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, República de Colombia, "Red de Cooperantes," [Web site]; available from <http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas2/RedCooperantes041220.pdf>; Internet; accessed 25 September 2007, 1.

[Common state: Development for Everyone],¹⁵⁶ developed by the Uribe administration. Among the most relevant and successful programs is *Familias en acción*. This program grants subsidies for food and education to the poorest homes and to displaced populations.¹⁵⁷ Another successful social program is *Red Juntos*, an integral strategy coordinated by different government institutions to improve the living conditions of the families who live in extreme poverty.¹⁵⁸

Four decades of insurgencies in Colombia have taken a huge toll on the society. One of the most difficult and delicate issues for the Colombian people has been to deal with summary executions and mass graves. For this, the Colombian government created the Unit of Justice and Peace under the Attorney General's Office (*Fiscalía*). This Unit is in charge of exhuming mass grave sites that are revealed by insurgents that have been granted amnesty. As of May 2007, the Unit of Justice and Peace had received information of more than 3,710 gravesites.¹⁵⁹

(5) Improving Governance and Control of Territory. Improving governance is a priority for the Colombian government to regain control of territories with guerrilla and paramilitary presence. The Democratic

¹⁵⁶ For information about the objectives of the 2006-2010 National Development Plan, see: Presidencia República de Colombia, "Plan de Desarrollo con Inversiones por 222 Billones para 4 Años [Development Plan with Investments over 222 billions during 4 Years]," 16 November 2006 [web site]; available from http://www.presidencia.gov.co/prensa_new/sne/2006/noviembre/16/05162006.htm; Internet; accessed 26 September 2007.

¹⁵⁷ In July 2007, President Álvaro Uribe estimated that by August 2007 one and a half million poor families would be receiving subsidies for food and education. For more information about *Familias en Acción*, see: Presidencia República de Colombia, "Palabras del Presidente Uribe en Celebración del Día de Independencia de Colombia en Nueva York [Speech from President Uribe during the Celebration of the Colombian Independence Day in New York]," 22 July 2007 [web site]; available from http://www.presidencia.gov.co/prensa_new/sne/2007/julio/22/08222077.htm; Internet; accessed 25 September 2007.

¹⁵⁸ For more information about the *Red Juntos* program, see: Presidencia República de Colombia, "Avances en Política Social Contribuyeron a Reducción en la Pobreza [Social Policy Advances Contributed Reducing Poverty]," 27 March 2007 [web site]; available from http://www.presidencia.gov.co/prensa_new/sne/2007/marzo/27/08272007.htm; Internet; accessed 25 September 2007.

¹⁵⁹ Jennifer Trowbridge, "Congress Should Support Efforts to Identify Bodies Found in Mass Graves in Colombia," *Latin America Working Group* [web site]; available from http://www.lawg.org/docs/colombia_graves_memo.pdf; Internet; accessed 20 September 2007, 1.

Security and Defense Policy is designed to recover authority with legitimacy, legality, and governance, while simultaneously generating confidence among the population and strengthening the political system.¹⁶⁰ The Colombian Presidency directly coordinates the actions of the different agencies involved through the Integral Action Coordination Center.¹⁶¹ Colombia's ambassador to the United States, Carolina Barco, declared that the Colombian government is "planning to invest more than \$1.6 billion over the next four years in development projects to help maintain 'territorial control'."¹⁶²

The Colombian government has taken a multi-dimensional approach to solve the challenges of guerrillas, paramilitaries, and drug traffickers, while simultaneously dealing with social issues and grievances deep-rooted in Colombian society. Instead of focusing solely on the use of force, the government has opted to use an integral approach to enhance the effective employment of its national security resources.

b. Results

The administration of President Álvaro Uribe has taken important actions to counter the threat of illegal armed groups that operate illegitimately within the country and to eradicate drug related activities. The central part of these actions focuses on a broad set of policies and reforms destined to address some of the origins of the problems.

To gain better insight into the response and results obtained by the Colombian state, we apply McCormick's Model of Insurgency and

¹⁶⁰ Diego Andrés Molano Aponte and Juan Pablo Franco, "La Coordinación Interagencial: El arma secreta de la Seguridad Democrática [Interagency Coordination: the Secret Weapon of Democratic Security]," *Desafíos* 14 (2006): 20-21. [journal online]; available from http://www.urosario.edu.co/FASE1/ciencia_politica/documentos/facultades/cepi/articulos_revista_desafios/desafios14/Desafios14.pdf; Internet; accessed 27 September 2007.

¹⁶¹ For information about the different government entities involved, see: Molano Aponte and Franco, "La Coordinación Interagencial: El arma secreta de la Seguridad Democrática [Interagency Coordination: the Secret Weapon of Democratic Security]."

¹⁶² Marcela Sanchez. "Building On Plan Colombia," *Washington Post*, 4 November 2006, Final Edition, A23.

Counterinsurgency. It is important to remember that although drug related activities represent a significant challenge to the Colombian government, this study focuses on the financing of insurgencies and paramilitaries. In this case, the four basic actors in McCormick's Mystic Diamond are:

- The state -- represented by Colombian government,
- The population -- is the center of gravity and whose support is the main objective of the state and the counterstate,
- The counterstate -- represented by the guerrilla insurgencies who want to overthrow the state,
- The international actors -- represented by those states who have actively supported either the legitimate government in its fight against the insurgency or the counterstate in its struggle against the state. In this case, the most important ally has been the United States. Meanwhile, Cuba and Venezuela have stood out as the international actors that have most sponsored the struggle of the counterstate.

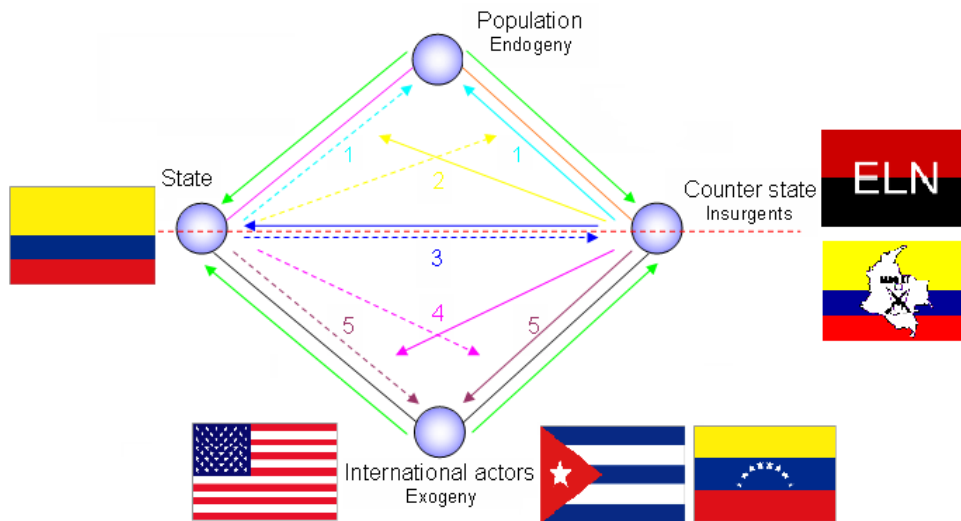


Figure 7. McCormick's model of insurgency applied to Colombia.

After: Gordon H. McCormick, *Seminar in Guerrilla Warfare* Lecture Notes, (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, Summer Quarter 2006).

Although very difficult to measure or quantify, the Colombian government has had significant success in countering the threat of the illegal armed groups. One of the most significant and recognizable successes of the Uribe administration has been its ability to frame the response of the state to the guerrillas, paramilitaries, and other organizational threats as against the law. The Colombian military and the national police have emphasized the relevance of respecting human rights and acting in accordance with humanitarian law. This strategy improved the image of the military and the police among the population, while legitimizing the response of the state through its institutions. The following chart illustrates Colombia's public perception of various groups and institutions:

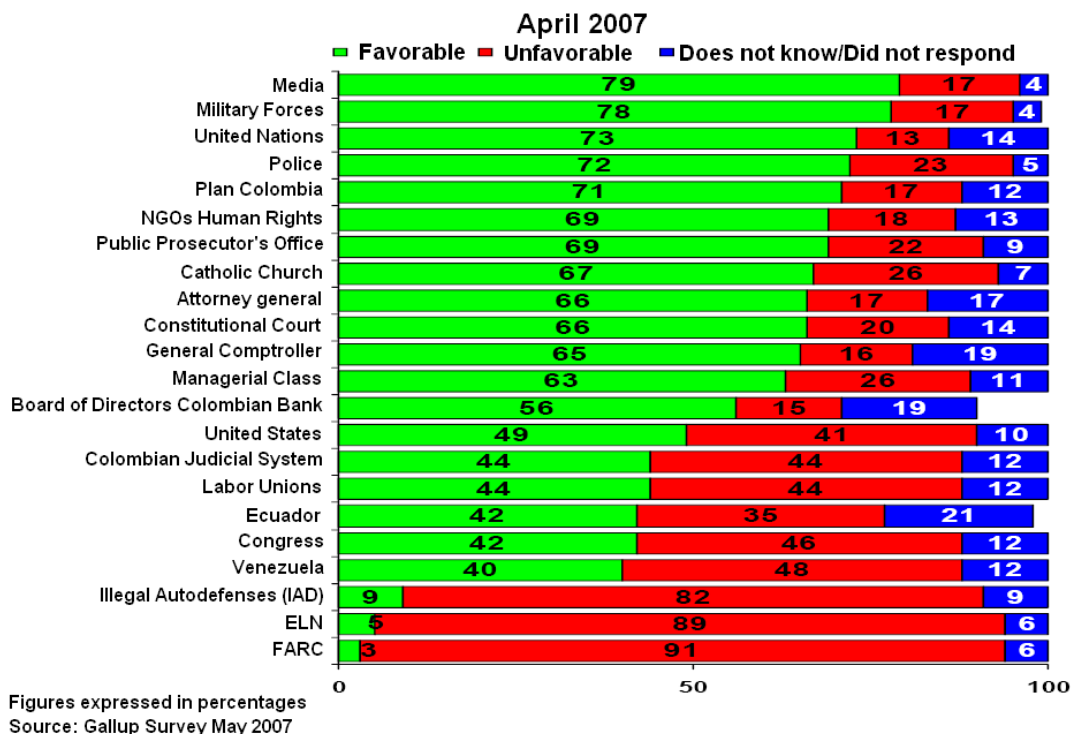


Figure 8. Colombian population's perception of groups and institutions.

From: Presidencia República de Colombia. "Logros de la Política de Consolidación de la Seguridad Democrática - PCSD [Achievements of the Consolidation Policy of Democratic Security]." Ministerio de Defensa, July 2007; available from

http://www.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Sobre_el_Ministerio/Planeacion/ResultadosOperacionales/Logros%20y%20Retos%20de%20la%20Politica%20de%20Consolidacion%20de%20Defensa%20y%20Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf;
Internet; accessed 1 October 2007, 82.

Legitimacy has played a fundamental role in the demobilization process of guerrillas and paramilitaries. The legitimacy of the state's response has forced the guerrillas and paramilitaries to further enforce discipline among their ranks to discourage desertions. The government's demobilization program has been very successful. In fact, the program has become an essential tool of its response against the counterstate. This program directly targets the counterstate's supporters and constituents. By demobilizing guerrillas, the government directly affects the guerrilla's objective of "accumulating forces in order to shift their guerrilla campaign to conventional warfare, as they did from 1998 to 2002."¹⁶³

According to statistics from the Presidency of Colombia, between August 2006 and May 2007, 1,554 people demobilized voluntarily. This totals 42,935 guerrillas that have demobilized during the first term of President Álvaro Uribe.¹⁶⁴ The Colombian government also established the High Council for Reintegration in order to aid and support demobilized people in their reintegration to civil society.

In spite of the obvious success, the demobilization program has been criticized for not differentiating among the different types of guerrillas and their degrees of commitment in their struggle against the state. Despite the success disbanding the paramilitary United Self-Defence Force, which consisted of approximately 32,000 paramilitaries, critics claim that there are new armed groups that are emerging with similar characteristics of paramilitary groups. According to the International Crisis Group:

¹⁶³ Giraldo Restrepo, 17.

¹⁶⁴ For information about the figures of demobilized people, see: Presidencia República de Colombia, "Informe al Congreso 2007," Julio 2007; available http://web.presidencia.gov.co/sne/2007/julio/20/Informe_congreso_2007.pdf; Internet; accessed 25 September 2007, 50-51.

Since early 2006, the Organization of American States (OAS) Peace Support Mission in Colombia (MAPP/OEA), human rights groups and civil society organisations [sic] have insistently warned about the rearming of demobilized [sic] paramilitary units, the continued existence of groups that did not disband because they did not participate in the government-AUC negotiations and the merging of former paramilitary elements with powerful criminal organizations...¹⁶⁵

The Colombian government has also been criticized for responding in a softer way to the paramilitary threat -- compared to its response to the guerrilla threat. This has further encouraged accusations that the Uribe administration is, to some degree, connected to the paramilitaries and, thus, protects them. Nevertheless, these accusations lack supporting evidence and are solely intended to discredit the Uribe administration.

Another strategy of the Colombian government to counter the guerrillas and the paramilitaries has been the transformation of public security institutions and the development of social programs that offer the population employment opportunities. These actions significantly contributed to the improvement of security throughout the country in addition to gaining popular support. According to statistics from the Colombian Presidency, security around the country increased significantly during the last five years.¹⁶⁶

The Colombian government has insistently promoted public diplomacy campaigns to gain international support and expose the nature of the guerrillas. This campaign has succeeded in obtaining the support of the population -- particularly in Europe where some governments have been known to accept the illegitimacy of terrorists. On March 20, 2006, the Council of the European Union officially designated the FARC, ELN and AUC as terrorist

¹⁶⁵ International Crisis Group, "Colombia's New Armed Groups," i.

¹⁶⁶ For information about the indicators of public security, see: Presidencia República de Colombia, "10 Principal Achievements - Security 2002-2007," June 2007 [web site]; available from http://www.presidencia.gov.co/resultados/documentos/2007/ava_segur_eng.pdf; Internet; accessed 27 September 2007.

organizations.¹⁶⁷ This designation constitutes a major achievement for the Colombian government since it impedes the financing of these groups by European NGOs. According to Sabine Kurtenbach, this designation "was significant, because it meant that members of these groups were criminalized: they were not allowed to hold public meetings inside Europe (where the ELN had support), and their financial assets were frozen."¹⁶⁸

The Colombian government has taken significant actions to address social grievances. These actions have been supported by strategies to diminish and disrupt the contact between the population and the guerrilla. The Colombian military has played an essential role in the conflict to counter the guerrillas and paramilitaries. The current Information Operations effort in Colombia has centered on the following main points:

- Framing the response of the state to the guerrillas, paramilitaries, and other organizational threats as against the law;
- Emphasizing respect for human rights and acting in accordance with humanitarian law; significantly improving the image of the military and the police among the population while legitimizing the response of the state;
- Targeting the counterstate's supporters and constituents through demobilization programs to undermine the guerrilla's objective of shifting to from a guerrilla campaign to conventional warfare;
- Professionalizing public security institutions and developing social programs to offer employment opportunities to the population;
- Promoting public diplomacy campaigns to gain international support and expose the nature of the guerrillas.

The use of Information Operations by the Colombian military has optimized the use of its human and material assets and restored the confidence of the population while reinstating the rule of law in the country. Although the

¹⁶⁷ European Union, "Council Common Position 2006/231/CFSP of 20 March 2006," *Official Journal of the European Union*, 21 March 2006 [web site]; available from http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_082/l_08220060321en00200024.pdf; Internet; accessed 29 September 2007.

¹⁶⁸ Sabine Kurtenbach, "Europe and the Colombian Conflict." *Inter-American Dialogue*, June 2005 [web site]; available from <http://www.colombiainternacional.org/Doc%20PDF/SR-EuropeColombianConflict.pdf>; Internet; accessed 30 September 2007, 6.

Colombian state has had major successes against the counterstate, the fight is far from over. Social inequalities continue to haunt the Colombian society, and some sectors of the population still see illegal armed groups as a viable source of income. It is necessary for the Colombian government, and particularly its military, to retain the confidence of the population and maintain them as an ally in the fight against the counterstate.

B. CASE STUDY: MEXICO

Mexico is located directly south of the United States and acts as the southern access portal for everything entering the United States -- both legal and illegal. Its vast geography and population is divided by the Sierra Madre Mountains. Mexico is a democracy based on a congressional system founded on the Constitution of 1917. Although Mexico traditionally elects to maintain its foreign interest abroad, it maintains its vocal presence among Latin American countries.

Mexico's criminal threat has drastically evolved over the past several decades. Though national leftists and drug cartels have always posed challenges to the Mexican government, they have recently flourished in light of 9/11 and as a result of the U.S.-led crackdown on Colombian drug cartels. Insurgencies have also taken arms against the state by waging mass media campaigns and using terrorist-like tactics to instill fear in Mexico's population. These insurgencies have transitioned from revolutionary nationalist to aggressive neo-liberal, greatly increasing the threat to Mexico's national security.¹⁶⁹

This portion of this thesis will highlight the rise in criminal activity in Mexico that warrants an unconventional military strategy. We will define Mexico's increasing drug problems and investigate the two main Marxist insurgencies that challenge Mexico's political ideologies and national security.

¹⁶⁹ William F. Arrocha, *From Revolutionary Nationalism to Neoliberal Nationalism: Redefining Mexico's National Security from the Early 1980s to the 1994 Zapatista Uprising*, (Kingston: Queen's University, 1998), 83.



Figure 9. Physical map of Mexico.

From: "Physical map of Mexico." Available <http://www.freeworldmaps.net/northamerica/mexico/map.html>; Internet; accessed 12 October 2007.

1. Drug Trafficking

Mexico's geographic location serves as a double-edged sword. Its close proximity to the United States facilitates free trade agreements resulting in ninety percent of Mexican goods being consumed by the United States. The same proximity and trade flow encourages illicit markets and trade from surrounding Latin American countries. Colombian drug cartels have delegated much of the transportation risks to the Mexican drug cartels. As a result, Mexican drug cartels pose an increased threat to both Mexican and U.S. authorities.

The drug problems in Mexico are centered first and foremost around smuggling. According to the U.S. Department of State, Mexico continues to be the principal transit route for drugs from South to North America.¹⁷⁰ The four principal illicit drugs that flow into the United States from Mexico are cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine. The bulk of cocaine destined for the U.S. market comes through Mexico and it is the major supplier of the heroin consumed in the United States. In addition, Mexico is the principal foreign source of marijuana and methamphetamine. As a result, drug trafficking has become Mexico's largest illicit employer and also the largest source of hard currency. The table below shows the empirical data of illicit drugs flowing into the United States from 2000 thru 2006.

¹⁷⁰ U.S. Department of State, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Mexico," Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, 25 February 2000. Available from http://www.state.gov/www/global/human_rights/1999_hrp_report/mexico.html; Internet; accessed 15 October 2007.

Illicit drugs	Calendar year						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006
Cocaine (metric tons)							
Arriving in Mexico for transshipment to the United States ^a	220	270	270	210	220 to 440 ^b	260 to 460 ^b	N/A
Seized in Mexico	20	10	8	12	19	21	10
U.S. border seizures ^c	23	20	23	16	22	23	27
Heroin (metric tons)							
Produced ^d	9	21	13	30	23	17	N/A
Seized in Mexico	.27	.27	.28	.31	.30	.46	.40
U.S. border seizures ^c	.07	.35	.30	.35	.29	.32	.47
Marijuana (metric tons)							
Produced	7,000	7,400	7,900	13,500	10,400	10,100	N/A
Seized in Mexico	1,619	1,839	1,633	2,248	2,208	1,786	1,849
U.S. border seizures ^c	533	1,083	1,072	1,221	1,173	974	1,015
Methamphetamine (kilograms)							
Seized in Mexico	560	400	460	750	950	980	600
U.S. border seizures ^c	500	1,150	1,320	1,750	2,210	2,870	2,710

Table 2. Estimated Amounts of Illicit Drugs Transiting Mexico, Produced in Mexico, and Seized in Mexico and along the U.S.-Mexico Border, Calendar years 2000-2006.¹⁷¹

¹⁷¹ Notes: Table with information from *The Interagency Assessment of Cocaine Movement; the International Narcotics Control Strategy Report*, National Drug Intelligence Center, the Central Intelligence Agency's Crime and Narcotics Center, ONDCP, and the El Paso Intelligence Center.

- a. The Interagency Assessment of Cocaine Movement (IACM) estimates the metric tons of cocaine departing South America and flowing through the transit zone towards the United States. It also estimates what percentage of this amount is flowing towards Mexico for transshipment to the United States and reports seizures of cocaine in the transit zone. To estimate the amount of cocaine available in Mexico for transshipment to the United States, we multiplied the IACM's total estimate of cocaine flowing towards the United States by the IACM's estimated percentage of what was flowing towards Mexico (which ranged from 66 percent in 2000 to 90 percent in 2004 and 2005). We then subtracted the IACM's reported cocaine seizures and disruptions in the eastern Pacific Ocean, western Caribbean Sea, and Central America for each year to estimate how much cocaine was available to transit Mexico. Because of the uncertain nature of the estimates involved, we rounded the figures we derived to the nearest "ten."
- b. Includes \$93 million in FMF regular appropriations and \$20 million in FMF supplemental funds that were transferred to the ACI account.
- c. DEA's El Paso Intelligence Center (and the IACM) defines drug seizures at the U.S. southwest border to include seizures at the U.S.-Mexico border or within 150 miles on the U.S. side of the border, including 88 border counties in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas.
- d. This estimate does not include heroin that is produced in Colombia and may transit Mexico on the way to the United States.

From: United States Government Accountability Office, "Drug Control: U.S. Assistance Has Helped Mexican Counternarcotics Efforts, but Tons of Illicit Drugs Continue to Flow into the United States," GAO Report to Congressional Requesters, August 2007. Available from <http://www.offnews.info/downloads/d071018.pdf>; Internet; accessed 15 October 2007, 11.

The large amounts of money that drug trafficking generates contributes to government and police corruption. Mexico's elected officials, police, judiciary, and sometimes military, are all plagued by corruption. It was recently revealed that the famous Arellano-Felix drug cartel generated more income than the entire Drug Enforcement Agency's annual budget. In fact, the Arellano-Felix brothers were known for purposely sending illegal shipments into the United States and alerting authorities just to give law enforcement a sense of accomplishment in that they were doing their jobs by seizing illegal drug shipments. Despite the recent capture of one of the Arellano-Felix cartel leaders, this cartel has topped the FBI and DEA's most wanted lists for several years. However, they continue to be responsible for multiple political and police assassinations.

The United States has the largest population of drug users in the world and it is no wonder that the U.S. considers Mexico (and Colombia) a crucial crossroad in its own counter-drug war. As a result, U.S. anti-drug policies and funding drive much of Mexico's anti-drug policies. The table below shows the number of U.S. agencies as well as the financial support that each contributes to Mexico in support of the counter-drug war. Clearly, this amount of support encourages Mexico to focus their efforts to combat large-scale production and trafficking bound for the United States.

Dollars in millions	
State (INL)	
Port and border security	\$72.7
Law enforcement infrastructure	28.4
Interdiction and eradication	23.3
Aviation	22.2
Training	14.8
Other	7.5
Subtotal	\$168.9
Justice (DEA)	
Mexico field offices	123.9
Intelligence and enforcement groups	8.9
Special support and administrative support units	7.2
Subtotal	\$140.0
Defense	
Counternarcotics support programs (sec. 1004) ^a	51.2
International Military Education Training (IMET) and other ^b	6.6
Subtotal	\$57.8
USAID	
Rule-of-law	15.6
Anti-corruption	13.0
Financial transparency	1.3
Subtotal	\$29.9
Total for all agencies	\$396.6

Table 3. U.S. Agencies' Support for Mexican Counternarcotics Activities, Fiscal Years 2000-2006.¹⁷²

From: United States Government Accountability Office, "Drug Control: U.S. Assistance Has Helped Mexican Counternarcotics Efforts, but Tons of Illicit Drugs Continue to Flow into the United States," GAO Report to Congressional Requesters, August 2007. Available from <http://www.offnews.info/downloads/d071018.pdf>; Internet; accessed 15 October 2007, 8.

¹⁷² Notes: Table with information from GAO analysis of Defense, Justice, State, and USAID data.

- a. Defense does not track obligations by country; thus these figures reflect estimated expenditures in Mexico during fiscal years 2000-2006.
- b. IMET is funded through State's foreign operations appropriation but provided by Defense. Since 2002, Defense also funded training through the Counter Terrorism Fellowship program.

There is no doubt that the nearly \$400 million dollars has impacted Mexico's drug markets. However the conventional strategy used by both Mexico and U.S. authorities has yet to disable drug trafficking and disrupt illegal drug trade flow from South to North America. Perhaps an indirect approach consisting of psychological operations using information warfare tactics would help halt drug traffickers at the borders of Mexico. Otherwise, enlisting the help of the population will remain a challenge since drug cartels can offer so much more monetary compensations than both the U.S. and Mexican governments combined. Mexico must develop an unconventional and indirect approach to counter the increasing drug problems it faces. Ignoring this, could be a detriment to future free trade agreements.

2. Insurgent and Paramilitary Groups

Although some scholars argue that Mexico has experienced a social revolution since the turn of the century, formal insurgencies have existed in Mexico -- specifically in the state in Chiapas -- since 1965.¹⁷³ Mexico has developed several programs to deal with these various peasant movements, which have recently taken on the form of violent terrorists. However, not much has changed for Mexico's troubled areas. Poverty, land conflicts, citizen inequality, and political discontent continue to invigorate indigenous populations. As government programs with good intentions are implemented, they are undermined by local elites that seek personal gain and re-direct the much needed funds. Nevertheless, these programs focus on the observable socio-economic issues rather than attacking the root causes.

It is often assumed that those with the lowest standard of living will engage in criminal activity. In Mexico, Chiapas is the poorest state and Mexico's method of dealing with the various peasant movements is to throw money at the

¹⁷³ Neil Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), Annex A.

situation.¹⁷⁴ Hence, prior to 1994, Chiapas received more funds per capita than any other state. However, root socio-economic issues were either ignored or overlooked which makes it difficult to provide realistic solutions to genuine problems. Consequently, Mexico's strategies in Chiapas have been counter productive since the 1980s, provoking divisions within peasant movements and in some cases leading to the emergence of new ones.¹⁷⁵

Mexico's poverty-ridden dilemma also gives rise to an anti-globalization climate that generates peasant movements. These groups assume Marxist-like characteristics and associate globalization with an imperialistic (Western) regime. As a result, they adopt terrorist mentalities and tactics to counter the double standards of modernization and Western influence. Mexico's most obvious case of anti-globalization is the Zapatista movement that arose in the southern region of Mexico -- Chiapas.

Mexico's current policy allows the Mexican military to support civil authorities to counter insurgencies. Although there are over one hundred self-proclaimed insurgencies in over twenty-two states,¹⁷⁶ Mexico's National Defense Secretariat recognizes only nine official insurgent groups. These groups are: Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), Ejército Popular Revolucionario (EPR), Ejército Revolucionario del Pueblo Independiente (ERPI), Comando Jaramillista Morelense of 23 May (CJM-23), Ejército Villista Revolucionario del Pueblo (EVRP), Comité Clandestino Revolucionario de los Pobres Comando Justiciero 28 de Junio (CCRP-CJ), Tendencia Democrática Revolucionaria (TDR), Coordinadora Guerrillera Nacional "José María Morelos,"

¹⁷⁴ Michael S. Radu, *Dilemmas of Democracy & Dictatorship; Place, Time, and Ideology in Global Perspective*, (Edison: Transaction Publishers, 2006), 300.

¹⁷⁵ Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy*, 148.

¹⁷⁶ Alejandrina Aguirre, "La Guerrilla En Mexico, Hoy [The Guerrilla in Mexico Today]," *Revista Contenido*, Octubre 2007, 69.

and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias del Pueblo (FARP).¹⁷⁷ Of these nine groups, the EZLN is the most dynamic because of its innovative tactics of using the media to attract public attention and gain both international and domestic support.

a. *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN)*

On January 1, 1994, the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (Zapatista Army of National Liberation—EZLN) launched a rebellion in the state of Chiapas that coincided with the implementation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). The EZLN used the global web to announce their plans and ultimately publicized their foot-march into the town of San Cristobal de las Casas. Their clever communicative tactics enabled them to quickly gain political status and avoid an overly aggressive military response. Since then, the Zapatistas have engaged in a succession of confrontations with the government, the Mexican army, and the local populace in lengthy negotiation processes. At the same time, they have been both subject and sponsor of a range of international conferences and information campaigns -- more than any other rural insurgency in Latin America.¹⁷⁸ As a result, the Zapatistas manage to complicate Mexico's relationships with much of the Western world with the help of special interest groups who seek to take aim at Mexico or attack free trade agreements such as NAFTA.

The Zapatista movement initially caught the Mexican government by surprise. The leader, a charismatic and former professor of communications, exploited the information highways to his advantage by provoking a government response, yet keeping them in-check by the international audience their info-

¹⁷⁷ Rubén Torres. "Difieren Sedena y PGR sobre presencia de grupos subversivos [Sedena and PGR defer about the presence of insurgent groups]." *El Economista*, [journal online]; available from <http://www.mexicoabierto.org/section.php?name=news&id=249&PHPSESSID=6c232f99999d774ece6f5067db5f3808>; Internet; accessed 24 May 2007.

¹⁷⁸ Mark T. Berger, "Romancing the Zapatistas; International Intellectuals and the Chiapas Rebellion," *Latin American Perspectives* 28 (2001): 325.

campaign had enveloped. Once the government recovered from the initial surprise, “the Mexican Army mobilized and proceeded to confront the guerrilla movement. After twelve days and 150 casualties, the rebel group was completely overpowered by the Army and the violence between the two sides ceased.”¹⁷⁹ The response by the Mexican government to the violent insurgency was constrained by a “dispersed cooperation among the myriad Mexican and transnational activists’ non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that support or sympathize with the EZLN.”¹⁸⁰ The relatively limited offensive capability of the EZLN was supported by the global “Information Operations” campaigns which eventually forced the government to cease its counteroffensive. After a ceasefire was negotiated, the initial socialist rhetoric of the group was replaced by demands for a democracy and a fair civil society, thus earning the title of “armed democrats.”¹⁸¹

The revolutionary Zapatista movement initially centered around the ideals of Emiliano Zapata, who led a movement that demanded “tierra y libertad” (land and liberty). As NAFTA started to take away jobs, land, and essentially liberty from peasants in rural area, the EZLN increased their stance against globalization, which, in-turn, strengthened their national and international support from like-minded organizations. The relationship of the Zapatistas and transnational activists was symbiotic in that it helped the Zapatistas to disseminate their ideology and demands while spreading the message and awareness of anti-globalization civil societies at the international level.¹⁸² Although the EZLN is afforded “virtual” protection from their web-captive

¹⁷⁹ Rochlin, 230.

¹⁸⁰ David Ronfeldt and others, *The Zapatista “Social Netwar” in Mexico* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1998), 22.

¹⁸¹ Thomas Olesen, “Globalising the Zapatistas: from Third World solidarity to global solidarity?,” *Third World Quarterly* 25, (2004): 256.

¹⁸² Olesen, 256.

audience, the Zapatistas have been very astute political negotiators and have strategically avoided giving the Mexican government reasons to take legal or military actions against them.

One of the largest handicaps for the Mexican government in countering the Zapatista movement is that neither the military nor the governmental has the capability or structure to effectively counter the Information Operations campaign of the Zapatista movement. Instead, the Mexican government attempted to co-opt and mollify the Zapatistas by encouraging “them to work within the political system, rather than supporting subversive tendencies in the country.”¹⁸³ Even though the Mexican government was aware, at least at cabinet level, about the existence of the EZLN eight months prior to the uprising, it chose “to talk with the EZLN’s leadership, using Archbishop Samuel Ruíz García as the mediator, to prevent an armed rebellion and seek a peaceful outcome.”¹⁸⁴ Another indicator of the government's intentions to settle the situation in a peaceful manner was that instead of increasing the level or readiness of the Mexican Army for any potential uprising, it “was instructed to avoid combat and to collect and provide information to top officials about conditions in Chiapas.”¹⁸⁵ Ultimately, the strategy of the Mexican government to contain and end the insurgency was influenced by Mexico's transition from modernity to post modernity -- specifically its membership in NAFTA. If the country had decided to continue fighting the Zapatistas, it would have had adverse consequences on the image of the Mexican government and the country’s economic power.

The EZLN is classified as a Marxist-terrorist organization by some U.S. intelligence sources. However, Mexican authorities dismiss them as a boisterous peasant movement. Although this group has yet to carry out violent, terrorist-like plots, the existing conditions, and the near-by growing Muslim

¹⁸³ Rochlin, 239.

¹⁸⁴ Ronfeldt and others, 43.

¹⁸⁵ Ronfeldt and others, 43.

population, make them vulnerable to Al-Qaeda recruitment or becoming a “subcontractor” for terrorist organizations. Because the members of this group are farmers by day and insurgents by night, it is difficult to judge their strength. However, during the late 1980s, the EZLN went from 80 to 1,300 combatants, and by the early 1990s the rebels had gained a degree of popular support.¹⁸⁶

Although Mexico’s government continues to negotiate for peace, they also continue to pursue an aggressive military strategy. The strategy has contained the EZLN to date. However, the Zapatistas are standing firm in their demands. They still have a great deal of international support as a result of waging an aggressive information strategy. Also, they continue to engage in high-profile national political activity resulting in pressure on Mexico City.

b. Ejercito Popular Revolucionario (EPR)

Another popular insurgent organization in Mexico is the Ejército Popular Revolucionario (People’s Revolutionary Army- EPR). Since their inception in 1996, they have been far more violent than the EZLN and perhaps more than any other insurgent group in Mexico. This group is characterized as a Marxist-Leftist organization that instills fear in local populations through acts of violence and coercion. Their goal is for Mexico to become a Socialist government. They are anti-American and anti-capitalist.

The EPR has had many clashes with the Mexican army and police. In 1996 and 1997, the EPR took responsibility for many coordinated attacks that resulted in several deaths and the loss of a military plane in Guerrero, Mexico. Mexican authorities know that the EPR is well equipped and trained and that they are believed to have killed dozens of police and soldiers. Outwardly, they appear to be a well-formed paramilitary organization. However, inwardly they are a networked group of Mexican citizens that take aim at the government’s policies.

¹⁸⁶ Berger, 339.

Although the EPR reached its pinnacle during the late 1990s, they have recently made a violent comeback taking responsibility for the bombings of several gas pipelines in July and September 2007. Prior to this, the EPR was known for hijacking public transportation vehicles, kidnappings, and other minor acts of violence. The bombings in Guadalajara and Veracruz have cost the Mexican government and businesses millions of dollars. The group warned that the violence and explosions would continue if the Mexican government did not release two senior EPR members said to be in custody.

The EPR is not as large as the EZLN. However, they also protest the Mexican government's repression of political opponents and other dissidents. Despite some rhetoric that the EZLN and the EPR have joined forces, there is a large disconnect between the two. The EPR does not have popular support and does not engage in information campaigns. Instead, they rely on brut force tactics to instill fear in the local populace, which strong-arms the government to listen to their demands. Their latest form of aggression resembles terrorist tactics. This has caused the Mexican government to respond with the traditional mass mobilization of troops. Nevertheless, these groups continue to cause a state of instability in Mexico.

3. Mexican Government Response

Upon assuming office, President Felipe Calderon immediately turned to the Armed Forces and police for assistance in his campaign against drug trafficking and crime organizations. He focused on law and order matters and extradited fifteen criminals to the United States on January 19, 2007.¹⁸⁷ The increased efforts have gained much praise from the Bush administration. Still, Mexico continues to be the leading transit country for drugs and a leading supplier of methamphetamines and marijuana. The USA Patriot Act

Improvement and Reauthorization Act of 2005, enacted in March 2006, includes provisions to combat drug smuggling from Mexico. However, this act relies on Mexican authorities to arrest and extradite these individuals.

The newly elected Mexican administration has directed each state to elevate their level of crime fighting by targeting high-crime and drug infested areas. Mexico relies on these conventional 'anticrime sweeps' to wage the war on drugs and criminal activity throughout the country. Although the crime sweeps are federally mandated, they are state monitored. Inadequate funding has created inconsistencies among states. The picture below shows which states have conducted anticrime sweeps as of September 2007. Two of the most crime ridden and drug infested states, Chiapas and Jalisco, have yet to conduct anticrime sweeps.

¹⁸⁷ Colleen W. Cook, "Mexico-U.S. Relations: Issues for Congress," 22 January 2007 [web site]; available from <http://www.ilw.com/immigdaily/news/2007,0321-crs.pdf>; Internet; accessed 15 October 2007, 1.



Figure 10. Mexico's anticrime sweeps by state.

From: Executive Office of the President of the United States: "Historic Pressure on Mexican Drug Trafficking Organizations." Office of National Drug Control Policy, October 2007. Available http://whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/Publications/sw_border_counternarcotics/MexicoSlides.pdf; Internet; accessed 17 October 2007.

In summary, Mexico has significantly increased its efforts to counter drug trafficking activities, as well as, insurgent and paramilitary groups within the country. Nevertheless, Mexico's military and law enforcement agencies have not established an Information Operations-based capability. Instead, Mexican government agencies communicate with the population primarily through the public affairs offices of each department. While this is a useful means to inform the public of government projects and military operations, it does not sufficiently strengthen the government's relationship with the population. As a result, some efforts of government agencies are inadequate, thus overlooking an opportunity to positively influence public opinion. In this regard, information operation

principles present a unique prospect to integrate public relations' capabilities and to improve efforts to gain popular support and legitimize the response of the state to counter drug traffic and insurgent organizations.

C. CONCLUSION

This chapter presented the case studies of Colombia and Mexico as related to the development of Information Operations capabilities. These case studies identified drug trafficking activities, as well as, insurgent and paramilitary groups as the most significant threats to each government. This chapter described the nature of each challenge to better understand the relevance of Information Operations. Although the challenges to the Colombian government are multifaceted, the Colombian government has chosen a holistic approach to counter these threats.

The United States has been the most significant ally of the Colombian government in its fight against the guerrillas and drug trafficking. *Plan Colombia*, initially conceived as a strategy to counter drug trafficking, evolved to become the dominant strategy to counter the guerrilla and paramilitary threats.

This chapter described some of the most significant strategies, including Information Operations, used by the Colombian government to counter the guerrilla and paramilitary threats. This chapter showed the relevance of continuing to solve social demands and grievances to diminish the appeal of insurgencies among the population.

The next chapter will describe how Information Operations can be used by the Mexican government and its military forces -- particularly the Mexican Navy -- to counter the threats of state.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION

A. MEXICO'S INDIRECT APPROACH TO INSURGENCIES

This thesis has defined Information Operations (IO) and investigated its use and potential in Latin American countries. Based on these findings, this chapter will focus on Mexico's ability to develop and implement an IO capacity to deal with existing and future unconventional threats and insurgencies. We acknowledge that Information Operations by themselves cannot solve the different problems that the Mexican military faces in everyday operations. Nevertheless, these operations are fundamental tools that can offer significant value to the Mexican Armed Forces.

Although the Mexican military does not currently have an Information Operations' capability, the establishment of such a capability could act as a force multiplier in support of current military operations. Because the Mexican Navy has limited jurisdictions, and is held in high regard amongst the population, this is a unique opportunity for the Mexican Navy to lead the development of an Information Operations' capability. The Mexican Navy already operates in a multi-dimensional environment -- on sea, air, and land. For that reason, the Mexican Navy can play a vital role in the implementation of a military IO capability: it can offer key support to Mexican ground and air forces. Therefore, we use examples from Mexico -- not in naval jurisdictions -- to highlight the emerging threats within the country. Developing an information warfare capability could support the wide array of successful operations already conducted by the Mexican military.

1. Mexico's Current Threat

Utilizing only conflict and conventional strategies is slowly becoming outdated: this is being replaced by technological advances. This makes warfare not only irregular in nature, but, also, makes it accelerate.¹⁸⁸ In the information age, warfare offers small non-state actors the rights and powers of large-state players. The classic example is the Zapatista movement in Mexico which forced the Mexican government and Army to maintain a defensive posture. It took the form of an aggressive and peaceful information campaign that generated sympathy and support from international NGOs.¹⁸⁹ Clearly, this type of warfare equalizes the battlefield and offers huge dividends from relatively small investments.

Information Warfare should be viewed as a non-violent, yet vital tactic of future warfare. The asymmetric battlefield has developed new tactics that reach every corner of the globe and, as a result, raises the implications of warfare. Therefore, Mexico must be prepared to gain the information initiative to win the battle of the 'story' and gain popular support.

Although Mexico is not traditionally known as a terrorist-ridden country, it is well known for fostering a century-long internal-revolution. Furthermore, the illegal drug cartels and insurgencies continue to create difficulties for Mexican authorities. The most recent examples of Mexico's awakened insurgencies are evident in the 2006 presidential elections and the 2007 bombings. On November 24, 2006, thousands gathered in the *Zócalo* Square in Mexico City to celebrate the unofficial "swearing-in" of the losing candidate and self-proclaimed winner of the presidential election, Andrés Manuel López Obrador. (Figure 1) This clearly shows a political divide among the population and is indicative of a revolutionary movement in Mexico. Additionally, in September 2007 the Ejército Popular

¹⁸⁸ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, *Swarming and the Future of Conflict* (Santa Monica: RAND, 2000), 1.

¹⁸⁹ Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2.

Revolucionario (EPR), an insurgent group that remained silent for nearly 5 years, took credit for explosions near petroleum sites in Veracruz and Tlaxcala, Mexico.¹⁹⁰ These explosions could also be linked to the political turmoil resulting from the on-going privatization struggle of the petroleum industry. Nevertheless, these recent examples clearly demonstrate that the conditions for an insurgent revolution exist.



Figure 11. Unofficial swearing-in ceremony of defeated left-wing candidate in Mexico's 2006 presidential election, Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador.

From: "Mexico's Lopez Obrador 'sworn in'," BBC News, 21 November 2006 [Website]; available from <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/6166908.stm>; Internet; accessed 2 October 2007.

Because the current situation in Mexico lends itself to insurrections, it is important to understand that actors take advantage. They challenge the stability and reformation of the Mexican government. The EPR uses guerrilla and, most recently, terrorist tactics to challenge government policies. This is accomplished

¹⁹⁰ No Author, "Comunicado del EPR [EPR communiqué]," *El Universal (Mexico City)*, 11 September 2007, [journal online]; available from <http://www.eluniversal.com.mx/notas/448463.html>; Internet; accessed 17 October 2007.

by spreading fear amongst local populations. The Mexican drug cartels gained relevance in the last decade by facilitating Colombian drug transport and trade and, as a result, increasing the criminal activity throughout Mexico. Finally, the EZLN is trying to benefit from Mexico's current political conditions. However, the EZLN has the cooperation of transnational non-government organizations that attract mass media attention and, therefore, attract the Mexican government's attention as well.

Mexico's limited success of countering insurgent groups is a result of an all-or-nothing response. Mexico has used either conventional heavy military forces or soft diplomatic means of resolution. Insurgencies have exploited both of Mexico's 'heavy' and 'soft' responses by adapting and overcoming the responses. In some cases, insurgencies are even outsourcing their work to impoverished populations (Chiapas). This parallels terrorist tactics and links terrorism and insurgencies. Daniel Byman of the Strategic Studies Institute argues that there is a tremendous overlap between terrorism and insurgencies.¹⁹¹ Therefore, if a government's response forces an adversary to adapt and improvise their strategy, it is imperative to maintain a prepared secondary response to deal with unconventional threats.

How then can the Mexican military, starting with the Navy, implement a more efficient and indirect approach to counter future unconventional military threats? How can Mexico counter future insurgents who gain popular support using Information Operations? Can the Mexican military sustain a protracted counterinsurgency without losing patience? If so, would the Mexican government approve a low-visibility approach that involves psychological operations directed against the population? Would the population accept such an approach? Lastly, would international actors and NGOs increase or decrease their support of Mexico's insurgencies if they become violent?

¹⁹¹ Daniel Byman, "Going to War with the Allies you have: Allies, Counterinsurgency, and the War on Terrorism," Strategic Studies Institute, (2005): 5.

Mexican Naval forces should assume the lead IO responsibility because they are already quite competent in their traditional and conventional roles. They suffer little to no recourse from the Mexican population's distrust of the police and military ground forces. Although the term "psychological operations" sparks criticism, the Mexican Navy could rename this activity and exploit information age capabilities.¹⁹² Thus, using naval psychological operation teams to support and influence grand military strategies will increase mission efficiency and counter enemy information campaigns.

The rise of the global media, and the adversaries that use it, also transform the way Mexico's military responds to insurgencies. One of the most profound features that made the EZLN so successful was their use of postmodern insurgent, or "net war," tactics. What distinguished the Zapatistas from other 20th century rebels was their use of NGOs and their aggressive information campaigns. Many people thought that the rebels in Chiapas were part of the old Sandanista-Marxist-Leninist groups. However, what they received was quite the opposite: the first post-communist rebellion in Latin America.¹⁹³ For this reason, Mexico should develop a strategy to deal with post-modern threats. Such strategies should emphasize working either directly or indirectly with local populations while fostering relations and building on the capacity to conduct effective operations against existing and future enemies. The current strategies that Mexico's military uses to deal with insurgencies are derived from a conventional doctrine and are perhaps inadequate to counter insurgencies. It is possible that the strategies used by Mexico should, therefore, be tailored to fit the threat. Perhaps a politically acceptable, low-visibility approach, using psychological and information-based concepts to support primary missions, would achieve results that are more effective.

¹⁹² Allison Batdorff, "Field Marketing in Fallujah; PSYOP teams build trust with patience, determination," *Stars and Stripes*, 28 September 2007, Mideast edition, 4.

¹⁹³ Carlos Fuentes, "Chiapas: Latin America's First Post Communist Rebellion," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 11, (1994): 56.

For many reasons, the information strategy used by the EZLN remains classic. One of the leading organizers of the EZLN and a charismatic spokesperson is Subcomandante Marcos. A university educated, middle-class “westernized” Mexican who recognized the existence of poverty and social injustices in Chiapas was transformed into a mythical legend by Mexican media outlets. Although Marcos claimed to be one of many, the information age immortalized him and aroused mass support for him and his cause. The same has happened with Mexican drug cartel leaders who parallel the drug lord icons of Colombia. Creating such mysticism could invite copycat actors. If not careful, the skills, tactics, and resources of other global insurgencies will transcend onto Mexico’s growing insurgencies. This would greatly increase threats by combining forces to achieve greater results. Therefore, developing government capacities to confront these emerging adversaries is drastically important to counter Mexico's threats.

Central and Southern Mexico are typically the areas of most resistance and, thus, most ripe for insurgent influences. The state of Chiapas, well known for its peasant movements, is the home of the EZLN. The Lacandon Jungle offers plenty of rural seclusion for insurgent populations. Chiapas is also known for restoring Mexico’s traditional, cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. The rural geography and the traditional framework result in a loosely governed region. As a result of NAFTA, the majority of the population has an income below the poverty line and many jobs have been eliminated. Furthermore, Chiapas has become the home to a growing Muslim population in a predominately-Catholic country.¹⁹⁴ As of 2000, there were over 257,000 Muslims residing in Mexico, mostly in Chiapas.¹⁹⁵ The city of San Cristóbal de Las Casas in Chiapas has one of the largest Muslim populations in Latin America and the number of

¹⁹⁴ Natascha Garvin, "Conversion and Conflict; Muslims in Mexico." *ISIM Review* 15, 2005. [journal online]; available from http://www.isim.nl/files/Review_15/Review_15-18.pdf; Internet; accessed 25 September 2007.

¹⁹⁵ Muslim Population Worldwide, "Muslim Population in Mexico," [web site]; available from <http://www.islamicpopulation.com/Mexico-Central.html>; Internet; accessed 29 September 2007.

Mosques continues to grow each year.¹⁹⁶ Some claim that Islam is gaining a stronghold in this volatile area of Mexico through converting hundreds of indigenous Mayans.¹⁹⁷ Should the Mexican government be worried about a culture clash or an Islamic movement in its own country? Could this worry be enough to leverage U.S. support? These types of areas are what Sean Anderson defines as “grey areas.”¹⁹⁸ He describes these grey areas as ungovernable regions in developing nations over which unstable national governments have nominal control. The lack of control allows criminals, terrorists, and insurgents excellent bases of operation from which they can conduct far-reaching effects on their targets.



Figure 12. Map of Southern Mexico, depicting grey area.

From: "Country Maps: Mexico (Political) 1997." *Perry-Castañeda Library Map Collection, University of Texas Libraries*, [Web site]; available from http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/americas/mexico_pol97.jpg; Internet; accessed 10 October 2007.

¹⁹⁶ Garvin, "Conversion and Conflict; Muslims in Mexico."

¹⁹⁷ Jens Glüsing, "Islam is gaining a foothold in Chiapas," *Spiegel Online International*, 28 May 2005 [journal online]; available from <http://www.spiegel.de/international/spiegel/0,1518,358223,00.html>; Internet; accessed 1 October 2007.

¹⁹⁸ Sean K. Anderson, "U.S. Counterinsurgency vs. Iranian-Sponsored Terrorism," *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement*, 2002 [journal online]; available from <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content?content=10.1080/0966284042000279027>; Internet; accessed 8 October 2007, 85.

Mexico's grey areas are notorious for civil unrest, insurgent and criminal activity and, most recently, Muslim conversions. Mexico can properly intervene against these suspect activities using unconventional methods to prevent an insurgent or terrorist safe haven from developing. Since the events of September 11, 2001, the U.S. considers Mexico the front line in the war on terror. Mexico could use this to leverage U.S. support in these grey regions by implementing an unconventional or psychological strategy.

2. Mexico's Diamond

Mexico's unconventional and indirect approach must be fair, remain consistent, and strive to gain popular support. The Mexican government is often criticized for exercising its authority via its ground forces and, as a result, has generated a certain anti-Army sentiment amongst some Mexican populations. Therefore, any future military strategy must be carefully planned and executed to lessen the distance between the populations and discourage any opposition. Although the Mexican Navy has traditionally been more successful than the ground forces at staying out of the political limelight, it would be wise to use the Navy to develop such strategy and share it with its military counterparts.

Gordon McCormick's "mystic diamond," as previously defined in this thesis, is a model that could help planners organize and devise a counterinsurgency strategy. Such strategy could be aimed at Mexico's recurring unconventional threats and integrate both psychological and information warfare tactics. This strategy could be used to cut off adversaries from their bases of popular support. McCormick's diamond offers a comprehensive framework for interactions between local populations, host-nation governments, insurgencies, and international actors (Figure 13). Both the host-nation and the insurgent's goal is to gain popular support and use it as leverage against the other. Once popular support is established, each side can persuade international and non-government actors to side with them. This increases the likelihood of victory. The host-nation government's goal is to destroy the insurgents or limit their

growth and influence. The insurgent's goal, with popular support, is to grow large enough to overpower the host-nation's control mechanisms to either overthrow the government or force it to meet their objectives. The EZLN gained political status using post-modern information warfare tactics so they could negotiate better conditions for the impoverished rural populations. The EPR demanded media attention using terrorist tactics and spread fear among the local populace. In accordance with McCormick's counterinsurgency model, both adversary groups achieved their initial objectives by winning over, or coercing, the local population. If Mexico's Navy could implement the mystic diamond within its jurisdictions, it could intervene with future adversaries from gaining popular support.

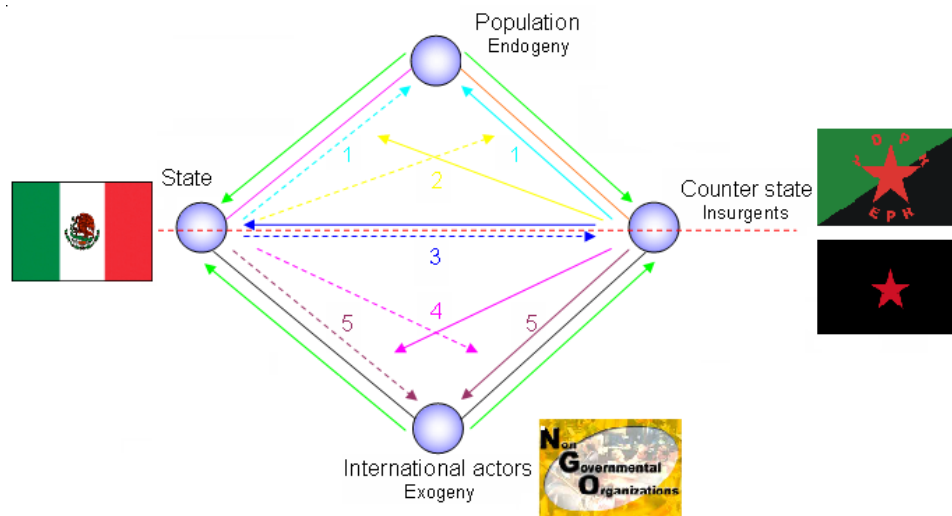


Figure 13. McCormick's model of insurgency applied to Mexico.

After: Gordon H. McCormick, *Seminar in Guerrilla Warfare* Lecture Notes, (Monterey, CA: Naval Postgraduate School, Summer Quarter 2006).

For Mexico to develop an effective counterinsurgent strategy, it must recognize its strengths and weaknesses as they relate to the insurgents. Mexico's authority and military might far exceeds that of the insurgents. However, insurgencies have been able to elude capture and maintain the

information advantage. The insurgents have networks spread amongst the local populations which enable them to gain the popular support much easier than the government. Furthermore, most insurgents in Mexico have “day jobs,” in which they are farmers by day and insurgents by night, making them very difficult to detect and target.



Figure 14. Principles of McCormick's Diamond.

From: Gregory Wilson, “Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-PHILIPPINES and The Indirect Approach,” *Military Review* [journal online]; 1 November 2006, 4; available from <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?index=1&sid=1&srchmode=1&vinst=PROD&fmt=6&startpage=-1&clientid=11969&vname=PQD&RQT=309&did=1189751281&scaling=FULL&ts=1191868263&vtype=PQD&rqt=309&TS=1191868478&clientId=11969>; Internet; accessed 8 October 2007.

Mexico's counterinsurgency strategy should therefore include information campaigns to appeal to and enlist the participation of the local populace. Such information campaigns strategically plan to not only outwardly appeal to the public, but, also, to have psychological effects that influence the people. Both help authorities against insurgencies. It is vital to have a strategy that is not counter productive to unconventional threats.

An example that lingers in the minds of the Mexican population is the events of Tlatelolco in 1968. As Mexico City prepared to host the Summer Olympics of 1968, political and social unrest stirred amongst the population. This fueled student movements against the Mexican government's repression. As tensions grew, civil demonstrations quickly turned into civil unrest. The Mexican government used violent force to quell the student-led civil disturbance. As a result, some Mexican citizens lost confidence and continue to be afraid of military ground and police forces. Because of their historical significance to civil-military relations, the events of Tlatelolco are sometimes compared to China's Tiananmen Square and to the U.S.'s Kent State riots. Much like the Zapatista (EZLN) movement, led by Subcomandante Marcos, which used modern mass media to spread their rhetoric, the students of Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Mexico (UNAM) also used this tactic to exploit their disgust of the Mexican government: they used the Olympic-staged media to spread their rhetoric. The timing of Tlatelolco caused political stress. To prevent the nation's embarrassment, the top-level decision makers pushed to quell student demonstrators. Unfortunately, this action perhaps precipitated a trigger-happy response. If so, this undoubtedly led to an exaggerated government response and, perhaps, over-zealous military and police force actions. The already tense relationship between the government and students was agitated further. The increase in political violence and government repression unified not only students from various campuses, but, also, workers and local activists from Mexico City. This confirmed the idea that sometimes a government's response can lead to unintended and counter productive consequences. The situation in Tlatelolco began as a simple student demonstration; however, the heavy government response ignited an unconventional response: it created, for some sectors of Mexico's population, a false sense of confidence and fear of uniformed forces.

Using McCormick's counterinsurgency model to develop a strategy to deal with future unconventional threats, such as those of Tlatelolco and the EZLN, is necessary for Mexico. Such a strategy needs an information warfare component

that can be deployed in conjunction with ground-based, or other kinetic operations, when tensions start to build. McCormick's diamond demonstrates how states vie for popular support by focusing on the people's needs and security to counter the insurgent's advantage. Information tactics could aim at swaying public opinion; simultaneously, police, or other local authorities, could make the people feel safe. Once public support is gained, it would be much harder for insurgencies to ask for international or NGO support. This would make it extremely difficult to overpower the state.

Since time is typically on the insurgent's side, this usually gives them the information advantage as well. The diamond model establishes specific tasks: some to counter the insurgent's goal of maximizing itself to overpower the state; others to optimize the state's security apparatus to overcome the information disadvantage. The diamond model depicts how both the state and counter state compete for popular support (the internal environment). The external environment is made up of international and non-governmental actors that can support either the state -- thru diplomacy -- or the counter state -- thru media, finances, and other means. Both internal and external environments require an unconventional strategy and indirect approach.

To establish the conditions for Information Operations to exploit, the Mexican military's indirect strategy should also include both psychological operations and civil affairs teams. These teams are vital in gathering detailed assessments and human intelligence directly from the source. In Mexico, gaining popular support is a zero-sum game in which one's gain is the other's loss. Since the initial phase of an insurgency is the best time for a government to counter it, determining the underlying conditions that make the environment ripe for insurgent activity is extremely important. The teams could also analyze socio-economic and education conditions critical in gaining popular support and countering an insurgency. Therefore, Mexico's objective should be to strengthen its government and military relationships with the population to overcome the information disadvantage, increase the security in volatile regions, and convert

human intelligence into actionable intelligence. This overall strategy would reduce the Mexican military's rising unconventional threats by encouraging local involvement -- rather than previous strategies, which alienated the people.

The success of this strategy is defined by many factors. All factors have led to an increased security state, host-nation legitimacy and control of a volatile region, and to denying insurgents and terrorists a safe haven in targeted geographical areas. As the security situation improves, the Mexican government could continue such strategy by developing the volatile regions. This could be accomplished by hiring the local populous and using local resources to create a psychological "teaming" effect, thus, winning over the population. Humanitarian and civic aid projects, such as construction of water wells, improvement of roads, public transportation, land distribution, and an educational system, would greatly benefit the local populace. These types of projects earn the respect of the local population, thus, improve the image of the Mexican military. This enables the military to, first, gain the popular support and, second, counter the insurgent threats. Working with the local populace, while strengthening local authorities, fosters civil-military relations, establishes the conditions for peace and stabilization, and provides a favorable impression of Mexican military efforts. Thus, this also creates a positive information campaign.

Using Information Operations in a manner that informs citizens of the negative effects of insurgencies and facilitates methods of reporting criminal activity to local security forces without fear of repercussions is essential. Information Operations maximize public awareness which can create a 'local' information network. Soon, people begin to experience better living conditions and become comfortable to share information with authorities. Eventually, they begin to withdraw their support from the insurgencies. These actions indirectly, yet positively, affect Mexico's ability to win over local populations.

Therefore, the Mexican Navy should take the lead in deriving a counterinsurgency strategy that encompasses information campaigns that attract popular support. Since they often neglect populations, or use excessive force to

quell civil disturbances and non-violent insurgent activity, current Mexican military operations are perhaps counter-productive. This type of over-reaction fuels tensions and creates conditions that are conducive to insurgent growth or, worse, breeds new extremist and terrorist organizations. Using the indirect strategy described in this thesis to counter insurgencies in Mexico can create a favorable impression of the Mexican government. This unconventional strategy is much more politically acceptable than an overzealous military response. Using local security forces as part of the solution demonstrates Mexico's commitment to work with the local populace to achieve peace and stabilization in its jurisdictional regions. A modern information and psychological warfare strategy can compliment and inform military operations to counter future unconventional threats. This must start with the Mexican Navy.

3. Information Operations Benefits for the Mexican Navy

Using Mexico's Navy to develop and implement an adequate Information Operations' capability would enhance and support the Mexican military's existing capabilities. Adequate Information Operations would create the following substantial benefits for the Mexican Navy:

a. Protecting Strategic Installations in the Sound of Campeche in the Southern Gulf of Mexico

In 2006, PEMEX [the state-owned oil and gas company, Petróleos Mexicanos] had 199 offshore platforms.¹⁹⁹ After the attacks against the United States on September 11, 2001, the Mexican Navy implemented *Operación Sonda* [Operation Sound] to protect the oil platforms in the Gulf of Mexico. This reinforced the surveillance that already existed in the area with additional ships,

¹⁹⁹ Petróleos Mexicanos. "PEMEX Anuario Estadístico 2007." PEMEX, [web site]; available from <http://www.pemex.com.mx/files/dcf/AEPep07.pdf>; Internet; accessed 13 August 2007, 11.

high speed interceptor crafts, helicopters, and surveillance aircraft.²⁰⁰ The Mexican Navy has always worked in close coordination with the United States Coast Guard to protect this area effectively. One of the first reactions was to establish a security area around the Sound of Campeche, located within the Exclusive Economic Zone, to restrict, monitor, and control maritime and aerial navigation. The Mexican Navy's operations in this area protect the country's strategic and vital oil installations. Therefore, the Mexican Navy can skillfully use Information Operations to support these operations by making the local population aware of the complexities and implications of the critical oil infrastructure. While the operations of the Mexican Navy are intended to guard the strategic economic assets of the country, they also protect the lives of the platform workers. Also, they maintain a positive marine environment. Information Operations can help the Mexican Navy to take appropriate measures to gain and strengthen their popular support in costal regions, such as Tabasco and Veracruz, where a significant part of the platforms' workers originate. Increased support and trust of the population can influence intelligence collection capabilities. This offers better insight into the issues that most effect the population within its jurisdictions.

b. Applying the Rule of Law within Mexican Maritime Spaces

Mexican Navy Oceanic Patrols operate at a hi-operational tempo to enforce the rule of law in the Territorial Sea and in the Exclusive Economic Zone. As a result, the Mexican Navy is constantly seeking to maximize its forces to accomplish its missions. These include, but are not limited to, drug trafficking and fisheries enforcement. To optimize these resources and to accomplish its missions, the Mexican Navy works closely with the U.S. Department of

²⁰⁰ Jesús Aranda and others, "Se redobra la vigilancia en ambas fronteras e instalaciones de PEMEX [surveillance increased in both borders and PEMEX facilities]," *La Jornada (Mexico City)*, 20 March 2003, [journal online]; available from <http://www.jornada.unam.mx/2003/03/20/018n1pol.php?ori-gen=politica.html>; Internet; accessed 27 July 2006.

Homeland Security -- particularly with the Coast Guard. Coordinating with multiple agencies has made the Mexican Navy's operations within the country's Territorial Sea and Exclusive Economic Zone more efficient. Information Operations could very well be used by the Mexican Navy to compliment its law enforcement operations. By using information operation campaigns, the Mexican Navy can strengthen its working relationship with those in the maritime career field. By doing so, the Mexican Navy can gain useful allies and encourage information about potential illicit activities in the maritime domain. Information Operations could also inform the population about the consequences of operating outside the law -- particularly those involved with insurgent or drug-related activities. It is essential to highlight that since the Mexican Navy operates under the premises of protecting human lives and respecting human rights, publicizing this in an information campaign could increase its influence among the population. It could also increase the population's confidence in the institution.

c. Interdicting Drug Trafficking and Production Activities

As the Mexican Navy increases its counter drug trafficking operations, it faces criticism from media and certain sectors of the population. An Information Operations' campaign could help keep the media on edge and maintain good community relations with local populations. It could also increase intelligence collection and gain valuable sources. The largest cocaine shipment ever seized in Mexico was over 23.5 tons of cocaine. It was seized by a joint taskforce of Mexican authorities who were acting on an intelligence-based lead.²⁰¹ Popular approval and confidence of the Mexican Navy constitutes an

²⁰¹ For more information about the Mexican authorities involved seizing this cocaine shipment, see: Secretaría de Marina [Secretariat of the Navy], "Comunicado de prensa [Press release] 151/07," 1 November 2007 [web site]; available from http://semar.gob.mx/boletin/2007/bol_151_07.htm; Internet; accessed 8 November 2007.

important asset for the Navy's intelligence based operations. Information Operations, when properly used, can contribute significantly to building confidence among the population.

In summary, the Mexican Navy's operations successfully integrate its sea, air, and land components for the accomplishment of its missions. However, the Mexican Navy can further Mexico's military objectives by developing an Information Operations' capability to share with its counterparts. These principles would act as force multipliers, building on the existing influence of the Navy's operations among the population, and would improve the military's public perception. Although Information Operations cannot win the battle by themselves, they can add great value to successful military operations.

B. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis demonstrates that, in this era of global communications, the Mexican military must carefully plan its response to insurgencies so that they are not counter-productive. Therefore, it must develop alternate and unconventional remedies to preserve its sea, air, and land security. Such strategy would require investigative analysis to determine the root causes of illicit activities. Current military strategies rely heavily on the mass mobilization of ground troops. However, an IO capability would enhance the effects of such mobilization. For example, in response to the attacks on the gas pipelines in July 2007, the Mexican Secretary of Defense ordered the mobilization of 5,000 troops.²⁰² This mass ground movement could have been greatly supplemented by a Navy-led IO campaign to inform and prepare near-by populations. This would have resulted in better results.

Mexico's conventional responses have had limited success in defeating insurgent groups. In some cases, they have damaged the image of its public security and military institutions. As in the cases of the EZLN and the EPR, the

²⁰² Aguirre, "La Guerrilla En Mexico, Hoy [The Guerrilla in Mexico Today]," 38-39.

Mexican military and police have lacked appropriate tactical intelligence prior to the ambushes and offensive operations. This suggests an insufficient intelligence structure and reveals the inability to not only to reach out to populations, but to learn from decades of prior counterinsurgency operations elsewhere -- from Vietnam to El Salvador.²⁰³

It is evident that the Mexican government's response was constrained by external factors. Therefore, the need for its armed forces to develop an Information Operations' capability is crucial. The Mexican Armed Forces, particularly the Mexican Navy, needs to establish Information Operations' capability to optimize the use of its resources in countering future unconventional threats.

The Colombian government, specifically the Colombian military, has used Information Operations to support its fight against the counter state to win the hearts and minds of the population. The decision to adopt this strategy was made long after the Colombian government had been engaged in fighting the counter state using a kinetic approach. The present strategy of President Álvaro Uribe is not focused on the military kinetic approach, but, rather, on a broader set of policies and reforms destined to address the origins of the problems. Although the conflict amongst the state, insurgents, and paramilitaries is far from over, the use of Information Operations has significantly contributed to legitimize the state in the eyes of the population. Acting according to the law, while emphasizing respect for human rights, the Colombian military gained the necessary advantage to legitimize the response of the state in its fight against the insurgents and paramilitaries. Despite the internal conflict, it is important to highlight that most of the population is in favor of the armed forces and the national police and willfully rejects the insurgents and their causes. The use of Information Operations also supported efforts by the Colombian state to solve social problems and grievances. This diminishes the appeal of the insurgencies.

²⁰³ Radu, *Dilemmas of Democracy & Dictatorship; Place, Time, and Ideology in Global Perspective*, 300-301.

Furthermore, this thesis presented Mexico's most significant challenges -- particularly those related to insurgencies and drugs. In this regard, the response of the Mexican government is conventionally framed: using the authority of its armed forces to respond to the counter state.

If Mexico were to adopt McCormick's model of counterinsurgency, it may experience some of the successes seen in Colombia. The model developed by the Colombian military to counteract the threat of the counter state has been successful, in part, to their use of combining Information Operations with ground operations. The Mexican military could use its Navy to support a similar model that could enhance current effectiveness in the maritime, air, and ground domains. The Mexican Navy is already well trained to avoid escalating situations and has a high regard for human rights. This type of training, combined with Information Operations, can lead to an improved military strategy for countering Mexico's current and future threats.

The fact that the Mexican Navy is not stigmatized by a poor public image, presents the unique possibility of establishing Mexico's Information Operations' capability without the risk of causing public commotion. Developing an Information Operations' capability would allow the Mexican Navy to support all military operations. It would influence public opinion to support government actions, preserve tranquility, and ensure stability during crises.

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